

July 2015

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Reducing Wildfire Risk

Summer is here in full force with high temperatures and dry conditions in many recreational areas. This year 90% of all wildfires in Idaho have been human caused and mostly on public lands. Outdoor activities should be enjoyed responsibly; here are a few wildfire prevention reminders to help reduce the risk.

 **"From a little spark may burst a flame" - Dante** 

It doesn't take much to start a fire under the conditions that exist currently. Record high temperatures are magnifying the situation as the vegetation continues to dry out. Whether working or recreating, people need to be aware of these conditions and how their activities could impact the environment. A fire can start quickly from a single spark, but where will that spark come from? There are many potential sources, but some common ones are listed below.

- 1.) Trailer Chains** - Many people connect safety chains to their trailer as a precaution. These are an important safety feature but can also be a hazard. Chains dragging along the ground can throw sparks; be sure to safely crisscross the chains under the hitch in a manner that provides at least three to six inches of space between the bottom of the chains and the ground.
- 2.) Tool Use** - Sparks can be created by any number of tools such as chain saws, grinders or welding equipment. Caution needs to be used with any implement that can cause a spark outdoors. The ground should be cleared to bare earth at a minimum of a ten foot radius around the work area and a fire extinguisher should be kept within that ten foot zone. This should also be a two person operation with one performing the work while the other is on fire watch duty.
- 3.) Firearms** - Target shooting using special ammunition or targets can start fires. Exploding targets and tracer rounds have started fires on established shooting ranges during the summer months. The use of these items is prohibited on most public lands and should be avoided in all locations during the summer.
- 4.) Fireworks** - Fireworks are prohibited on public lands. Using them safely on private land is critical. According to a National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) Report, in 2011 fireworks caused an estimated 17,800 fires nationwide resulting in \$32 million dollars in property damage. Keeping a bucket of water and a fire extinguisher nearby can help reduce some of the risks associated with their use. Never use them near dry vegetation or other flammable materials. There are many dangers associated with fireworks, for more detailed safety information go to: <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Fireworks/>
- 5.) Motor Vehicles** - Vehicles can create sparks both on and off the road. Motorcycles and ATVs should have spark arrestors on the exhaust. All motor vehicles should avoid driving in tall grass that may come in contact with any of the engine or exhaust elements. All off road vehicles should carry a fire extinguisher and shovel to immediately put out any small fire caused by the vehicle.
- 6.) Smoking Materials** - While the total number of fires started by discarded, lit smoking materials is on the decline, they still provide a great risk to the environment during this season. Ensure that all smoking materials are fully extinguished and placed in the trash. Some public lands may have smoking restrictions due to the fire hazard; check to see what bans are in place before recreating in an area.
- 7.) Campfires** - In areas where campfires are allowed, there are some basic rules to help keep them safe.

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|  Dig fire pit away from overhanging branches |  Clear a 10 ft. area down to bare soil around the pit |
|  Circle pit with rocks and stack wood upwind and away from the fire |  When done, drown the fire, don't leave until it is dead out |

Fire Information

For information on fire restrictions, currently active wildfires, fire safety and fire weather go to:

<http://idahofireinfo.blogspot.com/>



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