



Ravalli County Office of Emergency Management

205 Bedford St. Suite J Hamilton, MT 59840 406.375.6655

PRESS RELEASE

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As fire season approaches, Ravalli County agencies plan and prepare amid COVID-19 pandemic

Although the Bitterroot Valley has seen cool and wet weather conditions over the past month, area fire managers continue to urge Ravalli County residents to observe fire safety guidelines when conducting open burns of debris piles, fence lines, and fields. Long term forecasts show a warming trend as we enter the Independence Day weekend, as well as significant wildland fire potential in western Montana for the months of July, August, and September. Other areas in Montana have already seen wildland fires break out in the past weeks that have threatened homes, livestock, and property.

Firefighting organizations from the local, state, and federal levels have experienced challenges in mobilizing resources this year, relating to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Guidelines involving travel and operations have been put in place to reduce the chance of exposure to COVID-19. “We want to keep our firefighters and our communities as safe and healthy as possible”, said Erik Hoover, Director of Emergency Management for Ravalli County.

Fire managers will also be keeping a closer eye on weather conditions and fire potential, and may recommend that burning or fire restrictions be put in place a little earlier than normal this summer. “We are encouraging our residents to get their open burning done now, when fire danger conditions are low and before any burning restrictions are put in place”, Hoover added. Debris burning is expected to be closed in Ravalli County within the first two weeks of July.

Fire officials will begin weekly fire updates to the County Commissioners on Monday, July 6, including possible recommendations for burning restrictions in Ravalli County. Information on the burn permit system, preparing your home and property for wildfire, fire prevention, and other community resources is available at www.fireintheroot.org. Residents are also encouraged to sign up for emergency notifications through the Hyper-Reach program at www.ravalli.us.

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