



Forest Service News Release

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Forest Moves to Extreme Fire Danger

Hamilton, MT, August 1 - Just 6 days after going to “Very High” fire danger, the Bitterroot National Forest announced today that it is raising its fire danger level to “Extreme” due to our continued hot weather and dry fuel conditions.

Extreme is the highest fire danger level possible. When fire danger is “Extreme” fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious and development into high intensity burning will be faster and occur even on smaller fires. Direct attack is rarely possible and may be dangerous except immediately after ignition.

The Bitterroot National Forest last reached “Extreme” fire danger levels in July of 2021. Forest officials are asking the public to be especially careful when camping and visiting the forest. “The hot, dry and windy weather we have been experiencing this last week has increased drying rates in fuels and increased fire danger,” said Matt Young, Assistant Forest Fire Management Officer. “The benefits of the late spring/early summer rain we received are literally and figuratively evaporating”.

Current conditions across the forest are at our maximum recorded values with the start of August. Forest Fuels Assistant Fire Management Officer David Tingley stated: “Short and long-term forecasts indicate sustained weather conditions that support continued significant fire behavior through mid-September”.

Those planning camping trips should follow these fire safety tips:

- Pay extra attention to those items that can cause a spark, such as chains on a trailer. Any spark has the potential to ignite a wildfire.

- Those exploring the forest and backcountry in vehicles must stay on established roads and trails and avoid driving over dry grass and brush that could be ignited by hot exhaust systems.
- Keep campfires small and completely extinguish them before leaving camp. The best method is to douse the fire with water, stir the ashes and douse again, making sure that all ashes are cold to the touch. It is illegal to have unattended campfires.
- Firewood cutters should operate in the cool morning hours and keep a shovel and fire extinguisher nearby. All chainsaws must be equipped with a muffler and spark arrester. Temporary firewood cutting areas that opened on the forest back in June are also closing due to increased fire risks.
- Know before you go. Always check with your local Ranger Station prior to your trip to get the most up-to-date information on fire danger and fire restrictions for the area.

Open burning is currently prohibited in Ravalli County. Camp and cooking fires are still allowed. Fire managers will continue to assess the need for fire restrictions daily. Stage 2 fire restrictions would prohibit all campfires along with operating motorized vehicles off designated trails. Firewood cutting would also be restricted after 1pm under stage 2 restrictions. Visit www.mtfireinfo.org to learn more about current fire restrictions in place throughout Montana.

The ridge of high pressure that is bringing our hot temperatures is also transporting smoke from wildfires in Idaho, Oregon, and California causing hazy skies and smoke impacts. For the latest air quality information visit <http://svc.mt.gov/deq/todaysair>. This site displays particulate concentrations and health effects including a daily 'Wildfire Smoke Update'.

For more information about fires in Montana and other fires across the country, visit <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov> or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF for local fire information.

This summer, there have been 25 wildfires on the Bitterroot National Forest; 7 human-caused and 18 lightning fires.

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