



## Forest Service News Release

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### Forest Moves to Very High Fire Danger

**Hamilton, MT, July 24** — Hot, dry conditions continue to dry fuels out, prompting the Bitterroot National Forest to raise fire danger to “Very High” effective immediately.

Very high fire danger means that fires start easily from all causes, and immediately spread rapidly. Small fires can quickly become large fires and exhibit extreme fire intensity. These fires can be difficult to control and will often become much larger and longer-lasting fires.

“Spring rains have resulted in a tall, thick crop of grasses that are drying and curing, increasing the likelihood of a larger, more intense fire,” said Fuels Specialist Dave Tingley. “Heavy fuels, like standing dead trees and logs, are also extremely dry. Continued hot and dry weather is predicted for the next several days, including a chance of thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds.”

Given the conditions, residents and visitors alike should exercise caution when recreating outdoors. Please follow these fire safety tips:

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Smokers should light up only in areas cleared of all flammable debris. Dispose of smoking materials in vehicle ashtrays or crush smoking materials and matches dead out on bare ground. Cigarette butts should never be thrown from vehicle windows.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Ensure safety chains on trailers or other equipment do not drag, causing sparks.
- ✓ Make sure all mechanical outdoor equipment, such as chainsaws and off-road vehicles, are equipped with properly working mufflers, spark arresters, and bearings.
- ✓ Fireworks are illegal on public lands: every forest, every campsite, every day. Never light fireworks in the woods.

- ✓ Recreational shooting? Take precautions! Never shoot into dry vegetation and always make sure you're shooting in a safe location, away from roads, trails, campsites, and occupied areas. Be aware that shooting exploding targets is prohibited on National Forest System lands. For more information, visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/know-before-you-go/shooting>.
- ✓ 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.

Outdoor burning season is closed in Ravalli County, so burn permits are invalid. Visit [www.fireintheroot.org](http://www.fireintheroot.org) to learn more about outdoor burning seasons, rules, and fire prevention tips.

Unmanned aerial systems (UAS), or drones, should never be flown near or around wildfires. To learn more about Forest Service policy regarding UAS visit [www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/uas/responsible-use](http://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/uas/responsible-use).

This year, firefighters on the Bitterroot National Forest have extinguished three human-caused fires and 14 lightning fires.

We can all make a difference in reducing human-caused fires this season. Remember, One Less Spark Means One Less Wildfire. For the latest on fire restrictions and local fire information across the state, visit [www.mtfireinfo.org](http://www.mtfireinfo.org).

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](http://www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF) for local fire information.

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