

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** McKay, Tod G -FS <tgmkay@fs.fed.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 2, 2017 3:46 PM  
**Subject:** News Release: Fire Danger Level Raised to Extreme  
**Attachments:** Extreme Fire Danger.docx

### Fire Danger Level Raised to Extreme

Hamilton, Montana (August 2, 2017) – Fire danger on the Bitterroot National Forest will be raised to “Extreme” beginning tomorrow, August 3, 2017.

Firefighters responded to 13 human-caused fires in Ravalli County over the weekend including several sparked by fireworks, cigarette butts thrown into dry grass and even one involving a canon. Four of the fires were sparked by a safety chain from a trailer dragging on the pavement near Hamilton’s Westside Road.

Fire managers are imploring the public to be more responsible and self-restrained during this incredibly hot and dry summer of 2017 which is already breaking all-time records. According to the National Weather Service, Missoula received no measurable rainfall for the entire month of July, making it the driest July ever since records began in 1893.

“People really need to more careful, because it’s just getting drier and drier out there,” said Brad Mohn, Hamilton Fire Chief.

Critical fire conditions of dry fuels, hot temperatures, low humidity, dry lightning and gusty winds are expected to continue through this week and into the weekend. Stage 2 Fire Restrictions remain in place across the Forest and Ravalli County. This means all campfires are prohibited along with operating motorized vehicles off designated trails. Firewood cutting (chainsaws) is also prohibited after 1pm. Smoking is not allowed unless in enclosed vehicles, buildings, or flammable free areas. Camping stoves (liquid petroleum) that can be turned on and off are allowed.

Individuals who violate these restrictions can face fines up to \$5,000 and six months in jail, along with paying suppression costs and damages, if you start a fire. For more information go to <http://firerestrictions.us/>

“Our firefighting resources are stretched thin right now and we really can’t afford to be chasing additional human-caused starts,” said Mark Wilson, Fire Management Officer for the Bitterroot NF. Current firefighting activity across Montana has resources at critically low levels. An additional impact to local resources is the continuing efforts to support numerous large fires within our region.

Several days of increased fire activity also has many locations including the Bitterroot Valley dealing with smoke impacts and widespread hazy skies. Air quality in Hamilton is currently “Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups”. This means active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma should limit prolonged outdoor exertion. For the latest air quality information visit <http://svc.mt.gov/deg/todaysair>. This site displays particulate concentrations and health effects including a daily *Wildfire Smoke Update*.

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

Firefighters have responded to and extinguished 42 wildfires on the Bitterroot National Forest this summer. Due to the quick response of crews, most fires were kept small -- under 1 acre in size.

Stay in touch with us through [www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF](http://www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF) and [www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF](http://www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF).

For more information about fires in Montana and other fires across the country, visit <http://inciweb.nwccg.gov>

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