



Media Release

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Wildfire managers urge caution with fire over holiday weekend

(Fairbanks, AK) – Memorial Day Weekend represents the unofficial start of summer in Alaska. It's the weekend when people start cleaning up their yards, head out for the first camping or boating trip of the summer and break out grills for barbecuing.

All those activities can lead to wildfires, which is why Alaska's state and federal wildland fire managers remind Alaskans and visitors alike to exercise caution with any activity that could spark a wildfire over the holiday weekend.

With high wildfire danger persisting in many parts of the state due to warm, dry conditions, the flurry of recreational activity over the first holiday weekend of the summer increases the chances of new wildfire starts. Popular Memorial Day Weekend activities that can ignite wildfires include campfires, debris burning, barbecue grills, use of all-terrain vehicles, fireworks and target shooting, to name a handful.

Alaska experienced one of its earliest and warmest springs on record this year, melting away the snowpack earlier than normal and resulting in a vigorous start to the wildfire season. To date, there have been 120 wildfires reported that have burned approximately 15,925 acres. That compares to 69 fires that had burned 172 acres at the same time last year. All but four of this year's 117 wildfires have been human caused.

In areas where open burning is allowed, a Division of Forestry burn permit is required to burn organic debris and to use a burn barrel. Debris burning and the use of burn barrels are prohibited during burn suspensions but campfires smaller than 3 feet in diameter are allowed. Burn permits and information about safe burning practices are available at local forestry offices, local fire departments and online at <http://forestry.alaska.gov/burn>. The same website can be used to determine if a burn suspension is in effect in a

specific area or you can call your local forestry office. A directory of statewide forestry offices can be found at <http://forestry.alaska.gov>.

Here are a few tips from the Alaska Division of Forestry, BLM Alaska Fire Service and U.S. Forest Service to help prevent wildfires this weekend and the rest of the summer:

- Never leave a fire of any kind unattended for any length of time.
- In areas where open burning is allowed, make sure you have a Division of Forestry burn permit and follow the safe burning guidelines listed on it. Call your local state forestry office or go online to ensure burning is allowed on the day you want to burn.
- Clear areas around campfires down to gravel or mineral soil and keep campfires small and away from grasses and other vegetation that can catch fire.
- Have tools and water on hand to prevent fires from escaping.
- Make sure campfires are completely extinguished before leaving a campsite by repeatedly drowning them with water and stirring the coals/ashes until they are cold to the touch.
- Dispose of barbecue ashes or coals in a fireproof container; do not dump them in the woods.
- Call 911 immediately if there is a wildland fire emergency.

Remember, you are responsible for any fire you start.

For statewide fire information, call 907-356-5511 or visit the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center website at <https://fire.ak.blm.gov> or go to <http://akfireinfo.com>.

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