



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Use caution with fire over Memorial Day Weekend

(Fairbanks, AK) – Don't let the slow start to Alaska's wildland fire season fool you – it's a matter of when, not if, we will experience wildfires.

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 Memorial Day Weekend.

Despite a mild start to Alaska's wildfire season and damp conditions currently around much of the state, 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.

Ample snowfall this past winter and cool, damp conditions this spring have thus far kept wildfires in the state to a minimum but that trend can change with a few hot, dry, windy days. To date, there have been 69 fires that have burned just 172 acres in Alaska. All but one of those fires were human caused.

Spring greenup has yet to arrive in some parts of the state, specifically the Kenai Peninsula, Copper River Basin and Tok areas. Dried, cured grasses in those areas pose a significant wildfire risk until greenup hits.

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. You must call your local state forestry office or go online to ensure burning is allowed on the day you want to burn. For burn permit information, go to <http://forestry.alaska.gov/burn/>.
- 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 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, visit the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center website at <https://fire.ak.blm.gov> or go to <http://akfireinfo.com>.

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