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Hunters heading afield can help reduce wildland fire danger

(Fairbanks, AK) – With many hunting seasons in Alaska opening this month, the Alaska Division of Forestry reminds hunters heading into the woods to be careful with any activities that could ignite a wildfire.

While abundant rainfall, shorter daylight hours and cooler temperatures have reduced fire danger across most of the state in the last six weeks, it will only take a few hot days to dry the surface fuels that could fuel a wildfire.

The two biggest culprits of “hunter fires” are campfires, and the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). While campfires are important elements for a comfortable hunting camp and support warming, cooking and conversation, they also pose a wildfire threat if not used properly. Here are some tips to ensure a safe campfire:

- Situate your campfire in an open area on mineral soil or gravel bar, not near grass or under trees.
- Dig a pit for your fire or surround it with a rock ring to help keep it contained.
- Have tools and water on hand to control the fire.
- Never leave a campfire unattended for any length of time.
- Completely extinguish campfires before leaving by drowning the fire repeatedly with water and stirring it until it is cold to the touch.

Hunters using ATVs should check to make sure spark arrestors are working properly before they head into the field. While using ATVs, hunters should watch engines and mufflers for grass buildup that could fall off and ignite a fire in dry vegetation.

Likewise, hunters using chainsaws and other motorized equipment should ensure spark arrestors are in good working order. Hunters hauling boats or ATVs on a trailer should check to make sure no trailer chains are dragging on the road that could produce sparks that could ignite grass along the roadway.

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