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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Hunters heading into the woods should be careful with fire

(Fairbanks, AK) – It's hunting season and the Alaska Division of Forestry is reminding hunters heading out into the woods to use caution with any activity that could spark a wildfire.

While the rain that's soaked many parts of Alaska in the past week has lowered the wildfire danger, other parts of the state remain warm and dry with high potential for wildfires, especially the Kenai Peninsula, Matanuska-Susitna Valley and Copper River Basin. Those areas have received little or no rain in the past two weeks and the forecast is calling for continued warm, dry conditions.

"It's been a busy wildfire season in Alaska this year, but fire activity is winding down and we don't need any new fires," State Forester Chris Maisch said. "Hunters need to be responsible for any campfire they start and must monitor fires properly to ensure they don't escape."

Two of the prime hunting activities that can lead to wildfires are campfires and the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). While campfires used for warming, cooking and conversation are an integral part of a comfortable hunting camp, they also pose a wildfire threat if not used properly.

Campfires should be situated in open areas on mineral soil or gravel bars, not near grass or under trees. Surrounding a campfire with a rock ring will help keep it contained. But no fire, even those inside rings or pits, should be left unattended for any length of time. Hunters must completely extinguish campfires before leaving campsites, which means drowning the fire repeatedly with water and stirring it until it is cold to the touch.

Likewise, hunters should ensure that spark arrestors on ATVs, chainsaws and other motorized equipment are in good working order before they're taken into the field. Operators should watch for grass buildup on engines and mufflers that could fall off and ignite a wildfire.

Hunters who spot a wildfire should call 911 to report it.

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