



NEWS RELEASE

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One less spark could mean one less wildfire

Starting a fire on Arizona's public lands could bring hefty fines

PHOENIX -- A coalition of Arizona-based agencies has an important message for everyone heading outdoors this summer: Be a responsible recreationist. It only takes one spark on dry grass, leaves, branches or needles to start a wildfire.

Chainsaws, dragging trailer chains, carelessly tossed cigarettes, fireworks, abandoned campfires, unshielded OHV mufflers and discharging a firearm all can create sparks and cause wildfires. No matter how a fire starts, anyone found responsible may have to pay thousands of dollars in fines and restoration costs.

The Tonto National Forest, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Arizona State Forestry Division, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department are joining forces to remind recreationists to be extra vigilant to prevent wildfires. Human caused fires can be prevented. One less spark can mean one less wildfire. Do your part to prevent wildfires. Here are several tips to help prevent wildfires this summer:

- Make sure your campfire is completely out. If your fire is too hot to touch, it is too hot to leave. Take a shovel and plenty of water to put out your fire. Pour water on your fire and stir with a shovel. Repeat until the fire is cool to the touch. Use a gas stove if windy conditions are predicted.
- Don't stop or park your vehicle in tall grass or over small shrubs, where a spark or hot engine parts can start a fire.
- Make sure vehicles and tires are in good working condition, and safety chains and other trailer equipment are not dragging. Chains dragging on the road creates sparks and can cause fires.
- Always carry a fire extinguisher in your vehicle, as well as plenty of water and a shovel to put out fires.
- Make sure all motorized equipment, including chainsaws, all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles have approved spark arrestors to prevent a spark.
- Always discard cigarette butts in ashtrays inside a vehicle or a building. Cigarettes can start fires long after they have been dropped or thrown away.

- Avoid shooting on hot, windy days, and be sure your target area is free of dry grass and shrubs. Shooting at steel targets or rocks may throw sparks into dry grass and nearby brush. Use paper or clay targets to reduce the risk of sparks. When shooting, always carry a fire extinguisher, extra water and a shovel in case a fire does start.

- The use of fireworks, explosives and exploding targets is always prohibited on public lands, as sparks from these items can start a wildfire.

- Know before you go. Check weather conditions and plan accordingly. Call the Fire Restrictions Hotline at 1-877-864-6985, or visit www.firerestrictions.us/az/.

- If you see a fire -- or start one -- report it. Unreported fires can spread rapidly and cause damage to large areas.

Arizona summers are always hot and dry, but with the help of responsible recreationists, it doesn't have to be a time of catastrophic wildfires. Remember, one less spark could mean one less wildfire this summer.

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