



Malheur National Forest

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Umatilla National Forest

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Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

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News Release

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Forest Officials Take a Preventative Approach to Campfire Safety

JOHN DAY, PENDLETON and BAKER CITY, Ore. – Forest officials for the Malheur, Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests remind the public that seasonal safety regulations for building campfires when recreating on the three national forests will begin starting June 1.

These seasonal restrictions are in affect annually from June 1 through October 31 and require visitors to build their campfire in a fire pit surrounded by dirt, rock, or commercial rings, in areas cleared of all flammable material within a three-foot radius from the edge of the pit and free of overhanging material. A shovel and one gallon of water are required to be in your possession while building and tending campfires. These requirements also apply to the use of charcoal briquettes.

Campfires often serve as the centerpiece of family campsites across the three national forests and forest managers understand campfires are an important part of the outdoor camping experience and tradition.

“The intent is to allow campfire use while promoting safe campfire building techniques that, in the long run, will protect lives, property, and our natural landscapes,” said Brett Thomas, Umatilla Fire Management Officer.

The seasonal regulation does not prohibit the use of campfires, when conditions permit; it only designates proper conditions for safe campfires. The June 1 date for campfire safety regulations in dispersed and developed campsites is meant to encourage campfire safety before fire season comes full-swing.

“There’s a long history of wildfire in the Blue Mountains and we do not expect that to change” added Thomas. “While lightning is the number one cause of wildfires in this area, human-caused wildfires are preventable, unpredictable and can occur anywhere with no warning.”

“We can get very busy at this time of year dealing with the lightning caused fires, so preventing the added workload from human caused wildfires is our ultimate goal. Historically, the public has practiced safe campfire techniques and it is much appreciated,” shared Ron Simpson, Malheur Deputy Fire Staff Officer.

“The summer of 2018 is expected to be warmer and drier than average, which will increase the potential for human caused fires in the tri-forest region,” said Simpson.

The Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook predicts the Pacific Northwest to be above normal by July. A normal transition of fire season activity west and north is expected through July as warmer and drier than average conditions develop across the western states. Of concern is the preexisting grass crop from 2017 and the new growth which will cure by July across California, the Great Basin, and Oregon. Higher, timbered elevations in these areas will become a

concern by July as the past winter's below average snowpack melts allowing for the high elevation fuels to become dry enough to support fire activity.

During times of high or extreme fire danger, forests will implement additional Public Use Restrictions, also known as PURs, which will further restrict the use of campfires, chainsaws, smoking, and travel. PURs will be implemented in phases, based on increased fire danger, hot and dry weather conditions, and concern for public safety.

Forest officials recommend the following campfire safety precautions:

- Always abide by local campfire laws.
- Only adults should build and maintain campfires.
- Find a shady spot away from dry logs, overhanging branches, bushes, needles, or leaves.
- Use existing fire-rings where it is safe to do so. Don't build fire-rings in roads.
- Keep campfire rings small and use wood no bigger than the ring.
- Keep tents and other burnable materials away from the fire.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Those leaving campfires unattended can be billed for the cost of fire suppression.
- Drown the campfire with water and stir charred material.
- When leaving, make sure your fire is DEAD OUT. Very carefully feel all sticks and charred remains. Make sure no roots are smoldering. If it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave.
- Find more campfire safety information at <http://www.smokeybear.com/campfire-safety.asp>

For more information on public use restrictions, contact your local Forest Service office or visit our websites:

- <http://bmidc.org/restrictions.shtml>
- <http://bluemountainfireinfo.blogspot.com>
- <http://bicc-jdidc.org/jdidc/intelreport.shtml>

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<https://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur>

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