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Fire Danger HIGH in Missoula County Outdoor Burning by Permit Remains Closed Enjoy our Wildlands Responsibly

July 13, 2020, 2:00 PM- Missoula, Montana – Warmer, drier conditions have tilted the scales in fire danger from Moderate to High. Recent lightning storms have ignited a dozen fires in the area, but since grasses in the forest remain green and fuel moistures in larger forest fuels remains high, initial attack has kept all of those fires less than 1/3 of an acre in size.

Human-caused fires are the major point of emphasis for wildland fire managers. Fire danger at lower elevations are more likely to spread in valley bottoms as grasses begin to cure. There has been a significant increase in forest visitation in 2020, as many have seized the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation during the pandemic. With the increased use, public lands employees have seen an increase in abandoned campfires. This is a concerning trend as conditions will get hotter and drier in the coming weeks. As an alternative to campfires, the public is encouraged to use stoves that can be turned on and off. These types of stoves are legal throughout fire season, even if restrictions are in place.

Campfire Best Practices:

1. Campfires in Montana cannot exceed 3' high and 3' wide
2. Campfires are best lit in metal rings; rock rings with 2 feet of soil cleared of flammable vegetation are a second-best choice. If a rock ring is your only option, try to locate your camp where a rock ring already exists to lighten your impact.
3. Campfires should never be left unattended. This is especially dangerous in the heat of the day, when winds pick up and light fuels dry out.
4. A campfire isn't dead-out until it is cold to the touch. Drown your campfire with water, stir the coals in the water with a shovel, and feel the coals with the back of your hand to ensure they're out. This is the same procedures firefighters use during the "mop-up" phase of firefighting.
5. Visit BeOutdoorSafe.org to help spread the word and be an active steward of our great outdoors

Many firefighters are returning from an active fire season in Arizona, and they're gearing up for fire season in the Northern Rockies. Forest visitors will begin to see active patrols around campgrounds and in sites outside of campgrounds that are frequently used for camping. Please drive carefully in the woods. There are two good rules of thumb that every Montana resident and visitor should know:

- A. Drive at a speed that will allow you to stop in half the distance you can see
- B. Give the right of way to vehicles coming down the hill. It is easier for uphill traffic to slow down and pull safely into a wide turnout.