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# **News Release**

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** Spring Fire Safety Reminder**

**PRESCOTT, AZ (April 21, 2017) -** Summer is just around the corner and more people are heading outdoors to enjoy the season. The Prescott National Forest would like to remind visitors and residents in communities adjacent to the forest to be extra cautious while engaging in activities that have the potential for starting a wildfire. Weather conditions have been changing in the past couple of weeks with consistently higher temperatures; periods of wind; and decreased humidity levels, resulting in drier vegetation that is more prone to the spread of wildfire. This past winter’s precipitation has contributed to increased grass growth (fuel). The abundant grasses, on top of grass growth in place from last summer’s monsoon rains, will dry out and cure in a few weeks and may contribute greatly to the occurrence of fast moving fires. Spring months bring an increase in temperatures and windy days drying fuels and increasing fire danger.

Pay attention to your surroundings; be aware of wildfire conditions; and think clearly before conducting any activity that could cause an unwanted fire. Unwanted fires can occur at times when conditions are at their worse and in undesirable locations threatening lives and causing severe damage to the things we value: homes; trees; wildlife habitat; scenery; or entire watersheds. We all have a role to play in preventing human-caused wildfires; a little extra care takes only a few minutes of your time and could prevent a wildfire.  Below are a few reminders about fire prevention and safety on your national forests:

* **One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire Campaign** - Often times, wildfires are started by sparks from things we take for granted or don’t usually give much attention.  Note the conditions of the vegetation around you as you do yard work with lawn mowers or trimmers and if you are welding or working on metal objects.  Look for rocks to cause sparks against your equipment and dry vegetation close to your work area.  When towing, ensure your safety chains are securely attached to your vehicle and that they are of the proper length.  Many wildfires have been caused by dragging chains behind vehicles.  In many cases, multiple fires have been started on the edge of a road for miles – often never noticed by the driver.
* **Campfire Safety and Responsibility** – Choose your site for a campfire wisely.  Look for areas free of forest vegetation and not under low hanging branches or tree-tops.  Gently clear away debris on the ground within 3 to 4 feet around your campfire, but remember you can’t cut trees and shrubs to make room for your campfire. Find another location if there is live or dead vegetation in your way.  Keep your fire size to a reasonable level to meet your cooking and warming needs.  Most importantly, never leave your campfire unattended until you are certain that there is no heat left in the fire: even if you are only leaving your campsite for just a few hours to enjoy the Forest.  Be sure to leave enough time and have extra water to mix into your fire and remaining coals – stir with a shovel for several minutes.  Try a fire fighter’s trick of holding the back of your hand near the mixed coals to see if there is any remaining heat.

Careful however, not to put your hand into the coals and wait until you’ve stirred water into the extinguished fire before slowly lowering the back of your hand toward the remnants.

* **Recreational Shooting** – Target shooting is allowed on national forest lands unless otherwise posted, but it is your responsibility to ensure you are not on other lands where it is not allowed.  Ensure you’re shooting against a backstop unlikely to cause a ricochet and most importantly ensure you are not shooting toward or across trails and roads.  Please keep your public lands clean by taking your paper targets and bullet shells with you when you leave.  Although target shooting is allowed on the national forest, tracer rounds, exploding targets, incendiary devices, and fireworks are always illegal on Forest lands, State Trust Lands, and in most City Limits.  Be sure to check laws and regulations in your area.
* **FireWise and Defensible Space** -  Creating defensible space around your property such as clearing brush, dense trees, and grass reduces the potential of fire spreading to your home and reducing the possibility of a spot fire from an ember of a nearby wildfire starting on your property.  FireWise mitigations and creating defensible space around your home and property won’t guarantee that it will survive a wildfire without damage.  However, such efforts increase the odds of your property withstanding the damages caused by wildfires.  Often overlooked is the fact that by creating defensible space around your home, you increase the safety margin and options for your fire fighters to take action in defending your home from the threats of wildfire.
* **Burn Permits** – Before you plan your yard work projects that may involve burning the debris, be sure to contact your local fire department to ensure you are properly permitted and armed with good information. Treat burning debris with caution as you would a campfire: clear other vegetation away; keep the debris pile small and add to it as it burns down; have water nearby and ready; and completely extinguish any remaining coals with water and a shovel (use the fire fighter’s trick of sensing heat with the back of your hand).
* **Be Vigilant** – Report fires and suspicious activity.  If you stumble upon something or someone that concerns you, do not take action yourself.  Make notes of any important information such as the location of the concern, vehicle descriptions, license plates, and a description of what you saw.  Do not stay at the scene; rather, ensure you are out of harm’s way and call for help: Call 911 or if you see a fire on the Prescott National Forest call 928-777-5700 or on State and private lands call 623-582-0911.
* **Know before you go**. Check current fire information and restrictions at [www.wildlandfire.AZ.gov](http://www.wildlandfire.AZ.gov) or at [www.firerestrictions.us](http://www.firerestrictions.us) call 1-877-864-6985.

Visitors of the Prescott National Forest can obtain additional information via the following:

* Prescott NF Forest Website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/prescott/>
* Bradshaw Ranger District, (928) 443-8000
* Chino Valley Ranger District (928) 777-2200
* Verde Ranger District (928) 567-4121

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