Agencies Ask Public’s Help in Preventing Wildfires

PORTLAND--Things can change in a flash. A lightning storm could spoil your plans, or ruin a landscape. We cannot control the weather, but did you realize half or more of the wildland fires each year are caused by human activities? Lightning is far more dramatic, yet human-caused wildland fires are equally devastating and preventable. We can do something to protect our homes and our favorite places.

People love living in or visiting the Northwest. If there is a chance to be outdoors, you will find us there: working, playing, exploring, enjoying. That is why the agencies fighting wildland fires want you to know what you can do to help. We had lots of rain in the late spring and early summer, which delayed the 2005 fire season. But the current conditions point to record low fuel moistures in the grasses, shrubs and trees in Oregon and Washington.

Last year in Oregon and Washington, more than 2,000 human-caused wildland fires charred 44,000 acres. These fires were largely preventable. The agencies teaming up to fight wildland fires have created a website to help you protect yourself and prevent wildfires. It has pointers on making your home defensible when we have extreme fire danger like today. It also provides a real-time way to check the conditions in the range or forest area you plan to visit. Link to this helpful resource at http://www.pnwfireprevention.com.

When it comes to recreating in the outdoors, the key to a safe trip is to check the current fire regulations before you go.

Fire restriction levels may change quickly with changes in fire conditions, so the public is encouraged to check with the local land management agency for current restrictions. Know what is required before you leave on your trip. Wildland fire prevention guidelines include:

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Follow local restrictions and bans on burning, fireworks, and campfires. Check with local fire protection agencies for the latest information or visit http://www.pnwfireprevention.com

Build campfires only in designated areas, away from combustible materials, overhanging limbs and tents. Make sure campfires are fully extinguished and cold to the touch before leaving the area or going to bed.

Follow smoking regulations. Crush all cigarettes dead out. Never throw burning cigarettes out of car windows.

Keep matches and lighters away from children.

Don’t park your vehicle in dry grass. Make sure chainsaws, ATVs and motorcycles have spark arrestors.


If you are homeowner in the wildland urban interface, you can find information on creating defensible space around your house at www.firefree.org and www.firewise.org.

A few tips:

- Around structures, make sure to remove dead and dry vegetation at least 30 feet around the building and ensure gutters are free of materials, which could catch fire.
- Enclose vulnerable openings on structures such as under decks, where flammable materials could gather and ignite.

It’s a great time of year to enjoy your public lands. Please use great care to protect the resources that give us all such pleasure. By being informed and prepared, you can help assure that your favorite getaway is there for you next year.

About the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group

The Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group (PNWCG) is established to provide a coordinated interagency approach to wildfire management in Oregon and Washington. The PNWCG is composed of USDA Forest Service; USDI Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service; Oregon Department of Forestry, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Association of Fire Chiefs, Washington Fire Marshal’s Office, Oregon Fire Chiefs Association, and the Oregon Fire Marshal’s Office.

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