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Fire Danger Raised to **HIGH** in Missoula Area

Outdoor Burning Closed in Missoula County Due to Air Quality and Fire Danger

September 7, 2021 -- Missoula, Montana – Due to a rebound in higher temperatures and drying vegetation, Missoula County fire protection agencies are raising the Missoula area fire danger rating to **High** effective immediately. In high fire danger, dry grasses and needles ignite easily and fires can spread rapidly and may be difficult to control. Due to this elevated fire risk in conjunction with air quality concerns, fall outdoor burning has also been closed.

“While the rain last month helped slow our local fire behavior, wildfires are still actively burning in other states and sending smoke our way. In addition, some nearby fires have woken up due to increased heat and sunshine, and communities near those fires are experiencing air quality impacts. Everyone should pay attention to changing smoke conditions and check out www.montanawildfiresmoke.org for practical tips for checking the current air quality and creating cleaner indoor air spaces,” said Missoula City-County Health Department Air Quality Specialist Sarah Coefield.

Since the beginning of the year, Montana has experienced 2,208 wildland fires that have burned nearly 850,000 acres. Missoula County has had 113 wildland fires in 2021 so far; 65% of which have been human caused. Illegal debris burning is the leading cause. Outdoor burning in Missoula County is by permit only, and General Burning Season (burning of yard debris/untreated vegetative waste generated onsite) is closed until March 1, 2022. When fire danger drops and air quality allows, the Missoula County Fire Protection Association (MCFPA) will again open fall burning but remember that the only burning that will be permitted is **prescribed wildland** and **essential agriculture burning**. Within Missoula City limits, parcels must be at least one acre or more in size to be eligible for an outdoor burn permit, and recreational fires are banned year-round, with exceptions for barbecues. While we wait for better air quality and consistent moisture to come, please use caution, and realize that now is NOT the time to burn that pile of leaves and branches in your backyard. Not only is it a wildfire risk, but it’s also illegal! Visit www.MissoulaCounty.us/airquality or www.MCFPA.org for more information on outdoor burning seasons, permits, and current restrictions.

Abandoned campfires are another leading cause of wildfire in the Missoula area—especially in the fall with hunters scattered afield. For all those planning to head out into our public lands this autumn, be sure to check for local fire restrictions at www.MTFireInfo.org and put those campfires dead out! Please don’t park in dry grass, and cross your trailer chains to avoid dragging and creating sparks. When target shooting, choose an area free of vegetation or lots of rocks and don’t shoot on windy days. Avoid steel core/tip/jacketed bullets and remember that the use of exploding targets is prohibited on public lands. One less spark is one less wildfire!

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