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Contact: Kristin Mortenson, DNRC-SWLO Fire Prevention,
406.381.7451 or Kristin.Mortenson@mt.gov

Missoula County Fire Protection Association

Outdoor Burning Opens March 1st in Missoula County

Missoula, Montana – Spring is coming, Missoula County--and that means the opening of outdoor burning season!

The General, Essential Agriculture, and Prescribed Wildland Outdoor Burning Seasons open on March 1st in Missoula County. If you are planning to burn, please remember that all outdoor burning requires a burn permit, and the only material that may be disposed of by burning is untreated wood and vegetation generated onsite. Permits cost \$7.00 annually and can be purchased or renewed online at <https://app.egovmt.com/burnpermit/> or in person at most local fire protection agencies. 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. Additionally, inside the Missoula Air Stagnation Zone (an area that stretches about four miles outside Missoula City limits), it is illegal to burn piles of leaves and grass because these burns are typically very smoky. If you are within the Air Stagnation Zone, dispose of leaves and grass by composting them or delivering them to a facility such as Garden City Compost. Dumping of any type of yard debris on public lands is prohibited.

Historically, many wildfires in Missoula County occur in the spring due to debris burning and it was the second leading cause of human-started wildfires in Missoula County last year. Early spring burning can be especially dangerous. Burning while vegetation is dry and dead, but still early enough in the season that “green-up” (new growth of grasses and forbs) has not occurred to slow fire spread, can quickly lead to an escaped burn, especially if winds are added to the mix.

Fire Chief Chris Newman with Missoula Rural Fire District emphasizes this concern: “Many people don’t realize the wildfire potential in the spring. If you have a typical spring day in the 40s and add frost-killed dry grass and a strong breeze, you have a recipe for a controlled burn to get quickly out of control. Most people tend to burn relatively close to houses and outbuildings and these structures can become threatened very quickly.”

If you are planning to burn this spring, please be aware of the conditions of not only your burn pile, but the vegetation in the surrounding area as well as predicted weather. After activating your permit, have an adequate supply of personnel, water, and equipment to control your burn, and do not leave it unattended until it is cold-to-the-touch.

To learn more about outdoor burning seasons, permits, and safe burning tips, visit missoulacounty.us/airquality or [MCFPA.org](https://mcfpa.org). Following the Missoula County Fire Protection Association (MCFPA) Facebook page @MissoulaCountyFireProtectionAssociation will also provide you with information and tips through March’s *Mission Possible* theme of “Learn Before You Burn!” MCFPA’s *Mission Possible* is a fire readiness program with monthly themes and missions to help Missoula County residents become more fire safe and wildfire prepared.

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