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Stage 1 Fire Restrictions in South-Central Montana

Conditions are right for wildland fires.

As a precaution, Stage 1 fire restrictions will go into effect in Big Horn, Carbon, Musselshell, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure and Yellowstone counties at 1 a.m. on Friday, July 14. This includes all private, state, and federally managed lands in these counties except the Beartooth Ranger District of the Custer National Forest and the Big Timber Ranger District of the Gallatin National Forest.

Under Stage 1, fires are prohibited except within developed recreation sites, and smoking is allowed only in areas cleared of flammable materials. Exemptions include fires fueled solely by liquid petroleum or LPG, or other activities for which there is a permit or written authorization.

An exemption does not absolve an individual or organization from liability or responsibility for any fire started by the exempted activity.

Two lightning-caused fires burned about 2,100 acres near Park City last week. Another fire near Miles City was started by a vehicle on a two-track road with tall grass in the middle.

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“It doesn’t take much for a fire to get going,” said George Bokma, Stillwater County Fire Warden. “People need to be aware of how dry it is and do whatever they can to avoid starting a fire.”

Please take extra caution when working and recreating outdoors to prevent wildland fire starts. **Anyone who causes a wildland fire intentionally or through negligence will be held accountable for damage and suppression costs.**

Even in areas not under Stage 1 restrictions, a permit is required for any open burning other than campfires. Additional restrictions may also exist in certain areas. Before burning such things as slash piles, ditches, or fields, please contact your local fire department or sheriff’s office for more information and to obtain any necessary permits.

The smallest spark has the potential to cause significant damage, so always crush smokes dead out; never leave a campfire unattended; ensure that your vehicle has a properly installed spark arrester that is operational; stop and park only in areas clear of vegetation; and observe all fire restrictions. Take precautions, but always be prepared: carry a shovel, bucket and fire extinguisher. Also remember that cross country travel is not allowed on most federal and state lands.

For more information about fire prevention, please contact the Custer National Forest at 406-657-6200; Bureau of Land Management at 406-896-5013; Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation at 406-247-4400; Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks at 406-247-2940; Carbon County at 406-446-1595; Stillwater County at 406-321-0204; Yellowstone County at 256-2775; or your local fire department or sheriff’s office.

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