



Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit



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Contact: Lynn Barclay
970-826-5096

Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit ready for fire season

Craig, CO – Fire officials in northwest Colorado have been preparing for the impending wildfire season for several months by hiring seasonal fire staff, training and refurbishing equipment and fire engines. A National Wildfire Preparedness Review was conducted last week by fire specialists from around the country. The NWCFMU, which includes the Craig Interagency Fire Dispatch Center, met or exceeded qualifying standards for wildfire operations and communication. “We are set up and ready to go for fire response and management”, said Colt Mortenson Fire Management Officer for NWCFMU. “In fact, we have already sent crews and engines to support incidents in Colorado and other states.”

Available for wildfire response this season are: three Bureau of Land Management engines in Craig, two BLM engines stationed in Meeker; one US Fish and Wildlife engine stationed at the Browns Park Refuge; two Dinosaur National Monument engines; two US Forest Service Engines; two squads or hand crews consisting of five crew members from BLM and USFS; and the Craig Interagency Hot Shot Crew. Several engines or fire personnel are supporting firefighting efforts in Texas, AZ, GA, Colorado, and New Mexico. The Craig Hot Shots have just returned from Callie Marie Fire in southern Colorado and will most likely be reassigned to another incident by the end of the week.

Fire danger is moderate in Grand, Jackson, and Routt counties and the eastern half of Moffat County. In western Moffat County and Rio Blanco County fire danger is now high. The moisture content in vegetation is average or above in areas at higher elevations and beginning dry at lower elevations. As winds and warmer weather continue the vegetation will dry and begin curing. Cheat grass is already cured in areas and there is an abundant crop due the wet spring. While an average fire season is expected with the highest potential for wildfires in July and August, fuel moistures will drop beginning at lower elevations in western Rio Blanco and Moffat counties as we move further into the summer months.

Fire restrictions are in effect in many Colorado counties as fire danger is extreme in areas across the Front Range. People are reminded to check with local land management agencies and officials when planning outdoor activities or traveling in order to be compliant with local ordinances. Always use caution with fire outdoors and avoid burning on windy days. Stands of dead or beetle killed lodgepole pine trees also pose a hazard as they become weak and fall, especially during windy conditions.

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