

FIRE RESTRICTION AND CLOSURE TEMPLATE COUNTY ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN

PURPOSE OF FIRE RESTRICTIONS & EMERGENCY CLOSURES

The purpose of fire restrictions and closures is to reduce the risk of human-caused fires during unusually high fire danger and/or burning conditions, and for the protection of human life and property. Fire restrictions impose many limitations on the general public, and therefore should be implemented only after all other prevention measures have been taken. These measures may include, but are not limited to: increasing the number of prevention signs; public contacts; media campaigns; and other proactive outreach and public education efforts. Fire restrictions should be considered when high to extreme fire danger is predicted to persist. Other considerations are the level of human-caused fire occurrences being experienced, firefighting resources available, potential high-risk occasions (4th of July, etc.), and large fire activity occurring on a unit. Restrictions should not be considered the equivalent of a prevention program.

Fire restrictions and closures are invoked on federal, state, county, and private lands under federal and state laws. Agency Administrators are responsible for coordinating with other agencies including, but not limited to all Federal land management agencies, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado State Parks, county sheriffs, county offices of emergency management, and local fire departments. Agency Administrators issue appropriate documents and are responsible for enforcing restrictions and closures for those lands on which they have jurisdiction. Restrictions and closure procedures must be uniform across administrative and geographic boundaries. Public information about restrictions must be broad-based, clear, and coordinated.

Annually, the parties to the Annual Operating Plan shall review and validate the restriction and closure procedures and monitor the previous year's use of the procedures to ensure restrictions and closures are implemented consistently. At this time the parties will also evaluate and coordinate fire prevention, education, and outreach efforts. Any changes in agency contacts or administrators will be documented, with the development or amendment of a contact/communications plan. All press releases, description of stages, and other necessary agency documents will be available in template format before the start of the fire season. Development and issuance of news releases will be coordinated with all agencies for any implementation or rescission of fire restrictions or area closures.

When the conditions within an area approach threshold levels, appropriate agency personnel make recommendations to Agency Administrators, who in turn should consult with each other and initiate coordinated restrictions/closure procedures. These threshold levels should be determined by all wildland management agencies in the county before the onset of fire season and will become part of the Annual Operating Plan. The planning process for restrictions will include a public awareness campaign, keeping the media and public informed of the possibility of restrictions and/or closures.

Fire restrictions and closures should be planned for the long-term danger and not change at short-term fluctuations in risk, weather, and fire danger/behavior. When Agency Administrators determine (after appropriate consultation and inter-agency coordination) that conditions warrant removing the restriction, they should be rescinded. The agencies will coordinate all public information. It is the responsibility of each Agency Administrator to notify their agency head of local interagency decisions made about fire restriction or area closure implementation and rescission.

STAGE I AND STAGE II RESTRICTIONS

Definitions and Descriptions

There will be two fire restriction stages: Stage I and Stage II. **Stage III denotes area closure.** Each agency within a fire restriction area must write its own agency document that authorizes the restrictions within its jurisdiction. Each agency is responsible for using its own format, citing the specific laws and having the appropriate legal counsel review the document to assure it is correct and enforceable. To establish consistency, reduce confusion and standardize restrictions, the following components will be used in all restriction documents:

STAGE I Restrictions

The following acts are prohibited until further notice:

1. Building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire, campfire, coal or wood burning stove, any type of charcoal fueled broiler or open fire of any type in undeveloped areas.
2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building, in a developed recreation site or while stopped in an area at least 3 feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable vegetation.
3. Using explosive material: (ie: fireworks, blasting caps or any incendiary device which may result in the ignition of flammable material.)
4. Welding, or operating an acetylene or other similar torch with open flame.
5. Operating or using any internal combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly installed, maintained and in effective working order meeting either:
 - a. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Standard 5100-1a; or
 - b. Appropriate Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) recommended practice J335 (b) and J350 (a).

Possible Exemptions

1. Persons with a written permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
2. Fires in constructed, permanent fire pits or fire grates within developed recreation sites.
3. Any Federal, State, or local officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty.
4. Mechanical stoves and appliances fueled by bottled or liquid gas which allow the operator to control or extinguish the flame with a valve are permitted provided that such devices are approved by Underwriters Laboratory Inc.
5. Owners or lessees of land in the restricted area.
6. Residents in the restricted area.

NOTE: Agency Administrators are responsible for adding appropriate legal citations that will allow for implementation and enforcement of respective restrictions. It is strongly recommended that orders be reviewed by agency solicitor prior to issuance.

STAGE II Restrictions

The following acts are prohibited until further notice:

1. Building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire, campfire, coal or wood burning stove, any type of charcoal fueled broiler or open fire of any type.
2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building.
3. Using explosive material: (ie: fireworks, blasting caps or any incendiary device which may result in the ignition of flammable material.)
4. Welding, or operating an acetylene or other similar torch with open flame.
5. Operating or using any internal combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly installed, maintained and in effective working order meeting either:
 - a. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service Standard 5100-1a; or
 - b. Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) recommended practice J335 (b) and J350 (a).
6. Operating a chainsaw without a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher of not less than 8 ounces capacity by weight, and one size 0 or larger round pointed shovel with an overall length of at least 36 inches. The extinguisher shall be with the chainsaw operator. The shovel may be kept with the fueling supplies but readily available.

Other possible restricted acts under Stage II

1. Operating a motorized vehicle off designated roads and trails.
2. Operating a chainsaw outside the hours of 5:00 am and 11:00 am.
3. Overnight camping limited to listed campgrounds and recreation sites.
(An attachment of designated sites would be included)

Possible Exemptions

1. Persons with a written permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
2. Any Federal, State or local officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty.
3. Mechanical stoves and appliances fueled by bottled or liquid gas which allow the operator to control and extinguish the flame with a valve are permitted provided that such devices are approved by Underwriters Laboratory Inc.
4. Owners or lessees of land in the restricted area.
5. Residents in the restricted area.

NOTE: Agency Administrators are responsible for adding appropriate legal citations that will allow for implementation and enforcement of respective restrictions. It is strongly recommended that orders be reviewed by agency solicitor prior to issuance.

STAGE III – AREA CLOSURE

Emergency fire closures (closing an area to entry or use) have an extreme impact on the public and fire agencies, and are discouraged except under the most severe conditions. Closures are not justified by fire danger alone, but should be driven by the potential for risk to life and safety due to extreme fire behavior, high potential for human-caused fires, severe shortages of resources, and numerous large fires within the state.

Before the fire season, the agencies will review the evaluation guidelines and determine threshold levels that substantiate the need for closures.

Examples include:

- ❑ Potential loss of life due to explosive fire conditions.
- ❑ Potential for extreme or blowup fire behavior.
- ❑ Stage II or State III restrictions are not effective in reducing the number of human-caused fires.
- ❑ Resources across the geographic area are at a critical shortage level.
- ❑ Proximity to substantial population centers.
- ❑ The extent of wildland urban interface.