



NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Forest Service
Helena National Forest
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Helena, MT 59602

For Immediate Release

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Reminders for Firewood Cutters on the Helena Forest

HELENA, MONT., June 6, 2011—Forest Service officials want to remind firewood cutters to be safe, follow the guidelines of their personal-use permits and avoid active timber sale unit locations on the Helena National Forest; maps that show the areas closed to firewood cutting are posted on the Helena National Forest website.

Several areas across the forest are marked and signed as active timber sale units and subsequently are closed to all firewood cutting. Areas beyond timber sale unit boundaries, however, remain open to firewood cutting.

Many of the timber sale units are along various Forest roadways as part of the *Forest-wide Roadside Hazard Tree Removal and Fuels Reduction Project*. As decided in the Roadside Hazard Tree project, hazardous trees will be felled and/or removed up to 125 feet from the edges of specified open roadways located on the Lincoln Ranger District and up to 100 feet from the edges of specified open roadways located on the Helena and Townsend Ranger Districts.

"Timber sale units for the Roadside Hazard Tree project, that are closed to firewood cutters, are generally not large areas of land; they are up to 100 or 125 feet from the roadways," Kathy Bushnell, forest public affairs officer said. "Firewood cutting is permitted once people are beyond those timber sale unit boundaries, as is allowed through an individual's personal-use firewood permit."

There are many other locations on Forest Service land that are open for firewood cutting. Firewood cutters are responsible for ensuring that they are on Helena National Forest land. There are maps posted on the Helena National Forest website (www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena) that show which areas are currently closed to firewood cutting.

All firewood cutters must purchase a personal use firewood permit, of which needs to be placed on the dash of their vehicle while they are cutting firewood from the Forest. Permits can be purchased at any Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office; as well as at the following locations: South's Market, Broadwater market and Capital Sports and Western in Helena; Hahn Ranch, Feed and Supply in Townsend; and Grizzly Hardware in Lincoln.

Available firewood includes dead, down trees and logs, and standing dead trees—as long as the tree does not have a broken top, trunk holes or visible nests—on all Forest Service lands, except in developed recreation areas, within active timber sale units or other designated sites.

Trees that cannot be cut as firewood include any live, green trees or any trees—dead or alive, standing or down—that are marked with paint and/or signs. Trees with any green needles are considered live.

Other conditions of the personal use firewood permit include, but are not limited to:

- all wood cut that is greater than three inches in diameter must be removed or cut to firewood length and stacked on-site;
- six feet is the maximum length piece that may be removed under the firewood program;
- no trees or logs can be felled or skidded over live streams;
- firewood cutters must stay on designated roads and trail routes;
- to protect water quality and fish habitat, do not cut, pile or gather firewood within 150 feet of any running stream, pond, lake or wet area;
- slash must be piled or lopped away from roads, power lines, telephone lines, ditches and streams; **be sure to clean up the site after cutting and gathering your firewood.**

Most importantly, Forest Service officials urge people to be safe! Along with being safe with their equipment and tools, people need to be aware of the conditions within the area they choose to cut firewood. Many of the standing dead and dying trees are weak and can easily fall in windy or even slightly breezy conditions. Due to the recent weather conditions, many areas are wet and muddy; firewood cutters are asked to be mindful of wet road conditions that could result in rutting and erosion.

For more information about personal use firewood permits or additional suggestions for firewood cutting areas, contact your local Forest Service offices:

- Helena Ranger District and Supervisor's Office: 406-449-5201
- Lincoln Ranger District: 406-362-7000
- Townsend Ranger District: 406-266-3425

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