



# FIRE NEWS RELEASE

## Yreka Interagency Coordination Center



California Department of Forestry  
and Fire Protection  
Siskiyou Unit  
1809 Fairlane Road  
P.O. Box 128  
Yreka, CA 96097

Klamath National Forest  
1312 Fairlane Road  
Yreka, CA 96097

Contact: Brian Harris  
530-598-9303  
530-841-4485

*April 8, 2003 - Backyard burns become blazes*

### **Fire Season Underway**

Yreka, CA. – Fire season is off to an early start with several recent burns that escaped control in Siskiyou County. One fire that began as a controlled burn by a private timber company spread up to 70 acres before being brought under control, according to California Department of Forestry officials.

Ed Baxman, CDF's fire prevention and law enforcement bureau chief in Yreka, warned that unusually warm weather combined with spring winds has made for dry, risky conditions. "We're seeing burns escaping a couple months earlier than they usually do," Baxman said.

Burning brush, slash and leaf piles has become more complicated this year, but residents should remember to take these three steps to remain fire-safe:

- Obtain a burn permit from the proper authority,
- Check to make sure the day has been declared a "Burn Day," and
- Watch your pile until the fire is dead out.

The Siskiyou County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) will issue permits for debris burns until May 1, after which they will be issued by CDF. APCD also issues agricultural burning permits throughout the year.

### **A burning question**

APCD makes a daily determination of whether burns will be allowed based on air quality standards and weather forecasts. Residents should call 842-8123 or 1-866-652-2876 for a recorded message declaring acceptable burn days before lighting a pile.

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On days that are declared "marginal burn days," additional restrictions may be placed on the time or size of burns. For more information, check out APCD's website at [www.co.siskiyou.ca.us/aircomm/airpollution](http://www.co.siskiyou.ca.us/aircomm/airpollution) or call 841-4029.

APCD will continue to have responsibility for determining burn days based on air quality once CDF begins issuing burn permits. All burns must cease, however, when a statewide burn ban goes into effect July 1 due to high fire danger.

### **Light up your life**

Burn barrels for household garbage or outside debris are no longer legal in urban and suburban areas of the county, because dangerous chemicals are released when plastics, metals and synthetic materials are burned, according to the State Air Resources Board. Burning household rubbish or paper in fireplaces or wood stoves is not condoned due to the danger of flue fires.

Call APCD for a map or further information on the legality of burn barrels in your location.

Dry natural vegetation and clean wood waste free of preservatives, paint, stains, glue and metal may be burned in open piles. Piles larger than 4 feet by 4 feet require a permit from APCD until April 30 and from CDF starting May 1.

An adult must remain in attendance with a shovel and a water source at each pile until the fire is out cold, and the pile must have 10 feet of clearance from all flammable materials, such as dry grass. Burning should not be attempted on windy days. All burns must comply with Burn Day restrictions.

### **Keep the home fires from burning**

Protecting homes from fire is an especial concern for residences built on the edges or outside of town. CDF recommends homeowners observe the following safety measures:

- Create and maintain a minimum 30 foot perimeter clear of vegetation around the house and outside structures
- Create a fuel break with driveways, walkways or lawns and prune up trees to between six and 10 feet above ground
- Cut weeds and dry grass before 10 a.m.
- Remove dead and overhanging branches
- Keep roofs and gutters clear of pine needles, leaves and debris
- Stack firewood away from the house
- Ensure all motorized equipment has a spark arrestor
- Use fire resistant materials for construction, especially roofs

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A Los Angeles Times analysis of last fall's wildfires in San Diego County noted that homeowners that observed these precautions were mostly spared. "Almost nine out of ten houses destroyed... had flammable vegetation within 30 feet," according to the newspaper's report. Homes with wood or composition roofs did not fare as well as those with tile or metal roofs, the study showed.

Baxman notes that county residents may receive random visits by CDF fire engines during fire season. "These hazard reduction inspections are meant to help people identify where they can make changes to protect themselves," Baxman said.

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