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CITY IMPOSES STAGE 1 FIRE RESTRICTIONS

City Joins Missoula County in Response to Extreme Conditions

Mayor John Engen issued the emergency proclamation necessary to impose Stage 1 fire restrictions on Tuesday afternoon, joining the Missoula County commissioners, who also acted Tuesday. Fire danger in Missoula County moved to EXTREME on Monday.

In the City, Stage 1 restrictions apply on all open space and conservation lands. The restrictions prohibit use of fire or open flame, including campfires, smoking and the use of fireworks, which is illegal year-round by ordinance for safety. The restrictions are effective at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, July 3. Restrictions cut the risk and incidence of human-caused fires.

Fireworks are illegal in the City of Missoula year-round because of property damage, the danger of wildland fires, personal injury and the distress they cause some animals and people. The exception is the sale and discharge of some “novelty” fireworks, which includes sparklers, party poppers and other small fireworks. Visit the City website for a complete description:

<http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/1763/Fireworks>

This year, compliance with the fireworks ordinance is especially important, when temperatures are high and conditions extremely dry. **Missoula County’s fire restrictions extend the prohibition of fireworks from County parks, U.S. Forest Service and State lands to private property as well.**

The Missoula Fire Department will allow the professional public fireworks displays scheduled for Friday evening at the civic stadium and Saturday evening at Southgate Mall to take place. Fire Department professionals will devote a full day to planning and set-up, watering grassy fallout areas and putting attack lines in place. Three overtime-crew-staffed engines will work on Saturday, in addition to crews at the five fire stations.

“We’ll be fully prepared and set up,” City Fire Marshal Gordy Hughes said.

Conditions are four to six weeks ahead of historical fire conditions, Hughes said. Stage 1 restrictions generally are not needed until the first week of August.

Hughes reminds the public that the penalties for starting fires are high. Carelessness with fire could bring a charge of negligent arson, felony arson if the damage exceeds \$1,000 and criminal endangerment if the fire puts people’s lives at risk. The person charged may also be ordered to pay the expenses of fighting the fire.

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