

News Release

Susanville Interagency Fire Center

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection • Lassen National Forest
Bureau of Land Management • Lassen Volcanic National Park

For Release: May 20, 2004

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MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND MARKS THE START OF FIRE SEASON

Memorial Day weekend is recognized as the “official” start of the summer season, and in Northeast California this year, it will also be the official start of wildfire season for federal land management agencies.

Officials at the Lassen National Forest and Bureau of Land Management said this year’s season begins Sunday, May 30, a date slightly ahead of last year.

“We have had a very warm and breezy spring, and vegetation is drying quickly,” said Larry Ault, co-manager of the Susanville Interagency Fire Center, “and that accounts for the earlier-than-normal fire season declaration.

“We are already responding to wildfires,” Ault added. “We are asking everyone who enjoys our beautiful wildlands to be very careful with any use of fire.”

The start of fire season brings the opening of fire stations, the staffing of fire engines and the positioning of fire-fighting aircraft that can respond anywhere in the more than six million acres protected by the Susanville Interagency Fire Center (SIFC).

The four-agency (Lassen National Forest, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Bureau of Land Management and Lassen Volcanic National Park) fire center will rely on about 30 fire engines, 18 hand crews, three water tenders and three helicopters stationed in Bieber, Ravendale and Chester.

(MORE)

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During significant fires, the center can summon firefighting resources from anywhere in California or the nation.

"The severity of this year's fire season will depend on weather, including the number of thunderstorms we receive, and the care people exercise when using fire outdoors," said Tom Reed, SIFC co-manager. "As always, it will be imperative that people are careful with use of fire outdoors."

Permits for debris burning have been required since May 1, and will be suspended July 1, SIFC officials said. Other fire restrictions, such as limitations on campfires and off-highway vehicle use, could be put in place as fire dangers increase.

"People should burn only on calm days, within the allowable burning hours, and be sure they have a shovel and water hose handy," Reed said. "Fires should be kept small and an adult should always be present. Never leave a fire unattended."

Officials also urge backcountry recreation visitors to follow basic fire safety rules. Permits are required for campfires outside of developed campgrounds. They are available free at any office or fire station of the U.S. Forest Service, the BLM or the CDF. Campfires should always be attended, and should be dead-out before breaking camp.