



Megan Terlecky
Public Information Officer
Mesa County Sheriff's Office
(970) 986-0950 Cell
Megan.Terlecky@mesacounty.us



Chris Joyner
Public Affairs Specialist
Bureau of Land Management
(970) 210-2126 Cell
cbjoyner@blm.gov



Grand Junction Fire Dept.
Public Information Coordinator
(970) 697-8587 Cell
GJFirePIO@gjcity.org

NEWS RELEASE

Stage 1 Fire Restrictions take effect June 23, 2017

MESA COUNTY, Colo - The Mesa County Sheriff, and Bureau of Land Management are implementing Stage 1 Fire Restrictions effective at **12:01 a.m. Friday, June 23rd**. This applies to all of Mesa County including BLM Land with the EXCEPTION of the Grand Mesa National Forest. All Mesa County fire departments and fire protection districts are supporting the fire restrictions.

"We don't make this decision lightly. We know people are beginning to make their plans for the Fourth of July. However, combine the hot and dry weather we've already seen with what's being forecasted, we are very concerned about the significant wildfire potential," said Mesa County Sheriff Matt Lewis.

Fire restrictions are implemented based on moisture content of vegetation, weather outlooks and human risk factors. The National Weather Service is forecasting above average temperatures and dry conditions in the coming weeks. With increasingly dry vegetation and Fourth of July celebrations approaching, the danger for human caused wildfires increases even more. As a result, during Stage 1 Fire Restrictions, all personal firework use is prohibited and can include penalties up to fourth degree Arson.

This year brush fires continue to pose a threat in rural areas, but are also creating an increasing burden on urban areas and neighborhoods, posing a safety risk to people and property. Dry vegetation in both rural and urban areas can ignite and spread the fire rapidly. So far in June, the Grand Junction Fire Department responded to 6 brush fires and 8 structure fires within city limits.

"Fire safety is everyone's job. To be a firewise community we depend on every individual to act responsibly during periods of dangerous conditions," said Grand Junction Fire Chief Ken Watkins. "These restrictions are not optional, they are necessary safety precautions to protect everyone and every home in our community."

(cont.)



Mesa County Fire Chiefs Association



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What Stage 1 Fire Restrictions Mean

The restrictions allow fires in fire pits only. While the restrictions do not impact most shooting sports, explosive targets are prohibited. The Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit asks the public to be extra cautious when target shooting during fire restrictions.

"We've responded to a lot of human caused fires already and the dryer conditions make it harder to keep wildfires contained," said Jeremy Spetter UCR West Zone, fire management officer. "A lot of vegetation in our area had frost damage and died back. Those fuels are ready to burn." Spetter also cautions that low elevation fuels in nearby counties remain ready to burn.

For the entire county, open burning yard waste or fields is prohibited EXCEPT for agricultural burns with a **Sheriff Issued Burn Permit**. The Sheriff's Fire Marshal will conduct an onsite inspection of each planned burn BEFORE a Permit is issued to ensure all safety precautions are met. If they are not met, and conditions do not allow for a safe burn a permit will NOT be issued and any burn by that farmer will be in violation of the fire restrictions in place.

Causing or allowing a fire during fire restrictions can be a class 6 felony and can be punishable by fines up to \$100,000 and/or imprisonment up to 18 months. Other possible charges include fourth degree arson and intentionally setting a wildfire.

Conditions will continue to be monitored and restrictions will be adjusted accordingly if conditions change. However, the National Weather Service is predicting a higher probability of a drier than average summer.

Wood fires are never permitted anywhere on the Colorado National Monument.



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