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Commissioner

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Department of
Natural Resources

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 26, 2020

State permits will be required for burning, starting April 1

(Fairbanks, AK) – With Alaska’s wildfire season officially starting on April 1, the Division of Forestry reminds Alaskans that they must have a current burn permit from the division to burn debris or use burn barrels anywhere in the state.

Debris that can be burned includes organic material such as leaves, brush, grass, clippings, untreated wood, paper and cardboard. Those burning prohibited substances - including plastics, garbage, rubber, Styrofoam, insulation, asbestos, painted or treated wood and anything else that produces black smoke -- are subject to citations.

Residents should be aware of local regulations that may prohibit open burning or use of burn barrels within some municipal and city boundaries. Residents should check with their local fire department to determine if burning is allowed in their area.

The division has updated its burn permit program, and now issues small- and large-scale burn permits. A small-scale burn permit is required for anyone using a burn barrel, for burning debris piles less than 10 feet in diameter and four feet high, and for burning up to one acre of mowed grass less than four inches tall. Large-scale permits are required for burning that is larger or more complex than that allowed under a small-scale permit.

Burn permits are NOT required for camping, cooking or warming fires less than three feet in diameter with flame lengths less than two feet high. Violators of the permits and safe burning instructions can be cited and held both criminally and civilly liable for the sometimes very substantial damage caused by an escaped fire. Burn permits contain instructions for safe and legal burning.

Given concerns surrounding COVID-19 and its potential impact to wildland firefighters and other first responders, Alaska residents should burn debris now while the fire danger is low and ground is more likely to be covered with snow.

(MORE)

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The division anticipates it will suspend burning and impose burn closures once conditions begin to dry and fire danger increases. With the potential for staffing shortages due to COVID-19, the division will take aggressive steps to prevent as many human-caused fires as possible to ensure the safety of Alaskans.

Small- and large-scale burn permits are available free of charge at State Forestry Area offices and most local fire departments. In keeping with the COVID-19 social distancing directives to avoid unnecessary exposure, burn permits will be available outside of these facilities. Permits may also be downloaded from www.forestry.alaska.gov/burn and printed out in hard copy. Those with questions about burn permits and safe burning practices should contact their local forestry office by telephone.

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