



For Immediate Release: April 7, 2020

Forestry to suspend all burn permits starting May 1 due to COVID-19

(Fairbanks, AK) –The Alaska Division of Forestry (DOF) will suspend all burn permits – both small- and large-scale – effective at midnight on April 30, in anticipation of the impacts of COVID-19 on Alaska’s wildland firefighting resources this summer.

The use of burn barrels, the burning of debris piles, and any other outdoor burning activity authorized under previously issued permits will be prohibited on all state, private and municipal lands throughout Alaska as of May 1. Any person or business found to be violating this burn permit suspension order may be issued a citation to pay a fine or appear in court.

This statewide burn permit suspension will not include cooking, warming or signaling fires that are less than three feet in diameter with flame lengths no more than two feet high. It also will not include commercially manufactured outdoor cooking and heating devices with built-in open flame safety devices.

Given the potential effects of COVID-19 on the upcoming fire season, Alaska’s wildland fire suppression agencies need the public’s help more than ever to keep firefighters and communities safe.

Alaskans must do everything possible to prevent wildland fires, limit the spread of COVID-19, and protect firefighters and the public. The suspension of burn permits will help firefighting agencies mitigate some of the significant challenges they’re likely to face this summer, including:

- An anticipated lack of firefighting resources available from the Lower 48 as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions and quarantine requirements

(MORE)

Burn permits
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- The risk of exposing firefighters to higher risks of contracting and spreading COVID-19 when responding to human-caused nuisance fires
- Limited firefighting resources available to respond to higher-priority wildland fires which may place lives, property and infrastructure in imminent danger

Until the May 1 suspension takes effect, small- and large-scale burning on state, municipal or private lands continues to require permits from the state, or from local governments whose burn permitting programs meet or exceed state standards. The Division of Forestry will re-evaluate the burn suspension on a regular basis to determine if and when it is safe to rescind it.

Those burning before May 1 should carefully read and closely follow the requirements of their permits. They should also continually monitor and constrain any burn piles, and when finished burning, ensure fires are completely extinguished and cold to the touch so they will not holdover, rekindle and escape as conditions grow warmer and drier.

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