



For Immediate Release: September 6, 2019

Burn closure lifted, but burn suspensions remain in Kenai, Mat-Su

(Anchorage, AK) – Gradual reduction of extreme danger from existing or new wildfires in some parts of Southcentral Alaska may be creating public confusion about what burning is allowed, and what is still prohibited, a state forestry official said today.

“We appreciate the public’s understanding of our need to err on the side of caution when it comes to fire, given the summer’s unusually dry weather that’s led to destructive and disruptive wildfires,” said Tim Mowry, a spokesman for the Division of Forestry. “We want people to enjoy the outdoors, but also keep themselves and their neighbors safe.”

There has been confusion in the public about “burn closures” versus “burn suspensions:”

- During a “burn closure,” all open burning - including all campfires and the use of charcoal grills – is prohibited.
- During a “burn suspension,” all permitted burning – including open debris (brush) burning and the use of burn barrels - is prohibited. But campfires under 3 feet in diameter with flame lengths less than 2 feet high are allowed, as is the use of charcoal grills.

While a burn closure for the Kenai Peninsula and Matanuska-Susitna boroughs was rescinded as of 8 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 4, burn permit suspensions remain in effect in those two areas due to continuing high wildfire danger and persistently dry conditions. That means open debris burning and the use of burn barrels are prohibited, but the use of campfires and charcoal grills is allowed.

The Division of Forestry evaluates conditions on a daily basis to determine whether a burn suspension is warranted in a specific area, and posts that information on its burn permit webpage at <http://forestry.alaska.gov/burn> under the link titled, “Are conditions OK to burn today?”

People can click on a map on that webpage to see if there is a burn suspension in the Area in which they live. Or, they can call their local Forestry Area office's hotline (listed below) to see if burning is allowed.

Due to the extremely dry conditions and ongoing fire activity in Southcentral Alaska, the Division of Forestry last week extended Alaska's wildfire season from August 31 to September 30. That means people must have a burn permit to do any open debris burning or use a burn barrel through Sept. 30. The fire season and permit requirement normally expire Aug. 31.

Burn suspensions on the Kenai Peninsula and Mat-Su Valley will likely remain in place until those areas receive substantial rain or snow. While the rain that fell in some parts of Southcentral Alaska dampened surface fuels, it has not been enough to penetrate the deep layers of the forest floor that remain extremely dry and susceptible to burning.

Here is a list of the recorded burn hotline numbers for Division of Forestry Area offices around the state:

- Delta Junction – 895-5483
- Fairbanks – 451-2631
- Kenai/Kodiak – 260-4269
- Mat-Su – 761-6312
- Tok – 883-1413 ext. 2303
- Valdez/Copper River – 822-5533

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