

**United States Forest Service**

**Bureau of Indian Affairs**

**National Park Service**

**United States Fish & Wildlife Service**



**Minnesota**  
**Department of Natural Resources**  
**Department of Public Safety**  
Homeland Security & Emergency  
Management  
**State Fire Chiefs Association**  
**State Fire Marshal**

---

**Beware of the spring 'dip'**

May 14, 2018

*Fire danger still high in northern Minnesota*

Aaron Mielke, assistant forestry supervisor, Minnesota DNR-Grand Marais, 218/387-6031  
Christi Powers, public information officer, Minnesota Interagency Fire Center, 218/322-2739

Spring is budding and blooming in the northland. Verdant green can give the appearance of a lush landscape but beware of the 'spring dip.' It is the time of year when red pine needles reach maximum dryness. The needles are extremely flammable and fire can spread quickly torching and crowning in trees.

"Those drying needles can be like gasoline," said Aaron Mielke, Grand Marais assistant forestry supervisor and MNICS fire team leader. "The spring dip is a phenomenon in fire and fuel science. We can see peak crown fire activity in pine trees at this time of year because the needles are so dry," Mielke said.

The northland is experiencing creeping drought in some areas. Weather forecasters do not anticipate measurable precipitation until later in the week. Lack of rain, warm temperatures and lower relative humidity – moisture in the air - means that forests, recreation sites and campgrounds may be high fire danger areas. Flower blooms, greener grass and budding trees can be misleading.

"Green-up has been progressing slowly and we are paying attention to the fine fuels as they are very dry and could easily ignite fires right now," said Mielke. "Despite snow in April, the ground and fuels have dried out. Fires will start very easy in the forest right now. We as Minnesota residents to pay attention to county burning restrictions.

Fire danger weather is similar to when the "Bypass Fire" occurred near Highway 371 south of Brainerd. That fire burned 1,260 acres, destroyed two homes, five outbuildings and the old Wilson School building. It threatened 60 residences. Last weekend, a wildfire near Lancaster that started in grass and spread quickly destroyed several outbuildings and parked vehicles.

"Since the snow melted we are having a drying trend with very little precipitation during the past month," said Mielke. "Forests will readily burn under the right conditions when foliar (leaf/needle) moisture is low. We are asking the public to be vigilant about their campfires, clear flammable material away for at least three feet around the fire area, make sure fire is attended at all times, keep a source of water handy and make sure it is dead out before leaving."

Mielke and other fire team leaders also ask residents to pay attention to state burning restrictions that can change frequently. Check [www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/firerating\\_restrictions.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/firerating_restrictions.html) and [www.mnics.org](http://www.mnics.org) for interagency wildfire information.

## 30 ##

[www.mnics.org](http://www.mnics.org)