



United States Department of Agriculture

Rio Grande National Forest

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News Release

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Stage 1 fire restrictions initiated on Rio Grande National Forest lands

Monte Vista, Colo., August 20, 2020 – The Rio Grande National Forest is implementing Stage 1 fire restrictions effective at 12:01a.m., on Friday, August 21, 2020. The persistent drought, and the short duration of monsoonal moisture in July have created unusually dry conditions for this time of year in the foothills and mountains that surround the San Luis Valley.

“With the increasingly dry conditions and unfavorable long-term forecast, we feel this is a prudent decision” said Acting Rio Grande National Forest Deputy Forest Supervisor, Susan Johnson. “In addition, firefighting resources may be limited due to the several large fires across the west.”

Stage 1 fire restrictions prohibit:

1. Igniting, building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire (including fires fueled by charcoal or briquettes) outside of a permanent metal or concrete fire pit or grate that the Forest Service has installed and maintained at its developed recreation sites (campgrounds and picnic areas). 36 CFR § 261.52(a).
2. Smoking, except in an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials. 36 CFR § 261.52(d).
3. Operating a chainsaw without an effective and properly installed USDA- or Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE)- approved spark arrestor, a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher (with a minimum 8 oz. capacity and rating of 2A) kept with the operator, and a round point shovel with an overall length of at least 35 inches readily available for use. 36 CFR § 261.52(j).
4. Blasting, welding, or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame without being in a cleared area of at least 10 feet in diameter and keeping a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher (with a minimum 8 oz. capacity and rating of 2A) with the operator. 36 CFR § 261.52(i).

As a reminder, the use of explosives and incendiary devices, including fireworks, are prohibited on all federal lands.

Fire restrictions will be in place until further notice. In addition to criminal penalties, those found responsible for starting wildfires may also face restitution costs of suppressing the fire.

For more information, contact the Rio Grande National Forest at (719) 852-5941. Please also follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/USFSRGNF and Twitter twitter.com/RioGrandeUSFS.

The San Luis Valley Field Office is also initiating fire restrictions on Bureau of Land Management lands in five San Luis Valley counties. For more information please call (719) 852-7074 or go to: go.usa.gov/xvhGj

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