



# Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure Plan

Recommended By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Forest Fire Management Officer – Carolyn Landon

Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Forest Supervisor – Kevin Elliott

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## I Introduction

This document is intended as a stand-alone plan and serves as a guide for implementing fire restrictions and/or emergency closures on the Los Padres National Forest.

## II Objective

The objective of this plan is to reduce and/or mitigate activities commonly associated with unwanted human-caused wildland fires. Therefore, reducing and/or eliminating the risks and costs associated with damaging wildland fires during period of elevated fire danger by:

- Imposing restrictions on use of ignition sources
- Prohibiting entry into certain areas

The restrictions described under this plan are short-term in nature, and are designed to supplement yearlong fire prevention requirements. This plan does not directly affect activities conducted under Forest Service issued Special Use Permits or approved Operating Plans.

Special Use Permits and Operating Plans shall include a fire plan with precautions that can be implemented in conjunction with this fire restriction and emergency closure plan.

## III Summary of Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure

### Fire Use Restrictions

- 36 CFR 261 Prohibitions, Subpart A – General Prohibitions contains Fire Use Restrictions that are in place year round by statute and will not be included into Forest Orders.
- 36 CFR 261 Prohibitions, Subpart B – Prohibitions in Areas Designated by Order contains the pick-list of available Fire Use Restriction and exemption verbiage. There is no latitude to adjust or edit what is contained in Subpart B in a Forest Order. (Attachment M)
- Year-round Fire Use Restrictions are imposed by a Regional-wide Order and do not need to be repeated in Forest Orders. In addition, requiring a campfire permit while on Forest land is covered in the Public Resource Codes listed below.

#### **Public Resources Code**

*4103.5 Campfire Defined - "Campfire" means a fire which is used for cooking, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial or aesthetic purposes. This includes fires contained within outdoor fireplaces and enclosed stoves with flues or chimneys, stoves using jellied, liquid, solid, or gaseous fuels, portable barbecue pits and braziers, or space heating devices which are used outside any structure, mobile home, or living accommodation mounted on a motor vehicle. "Campfire" does not include portable lanterns designed to emit light resulting from a combustion process.*

*4433. Permits Required - A person shall not light, maintain, or use a campfire upon any brush-covered land, grass-covered land, or forest-covered land which is the property of another person unless he or she first obtains a written permit from the owner, lessee, or agent of the owner or lessee of the property. If, however, campsites and special areas have been established by the property owner and posted as areas for camping, a permit is not necessary. A written campfire permit duly issued by or under the authority of the United States Forest Service is necessary for use on land under the jurisdiction and control of the United States Forest Service.*

- Forest Orders are used to implement Fire Restrictions to minimize fire risks such as campfires, smoking, and target shooting, etc. and are typically done in conjunction with High Fire Season. Typically, prohibited acts listed in a Forest Order are in sequence and based on actual conditions presenting a threat to National Forest lands such as: weather, fuel conditions, public use, etc. The **Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure Matrix** (Appendix A) delineates observable criteria and conditions as they relate to fire occurrence risk, and the appropriate level of mitigations measures to consider implementing.
- When appropriate list of Campfire Use Sites will be provided, as an Exhibit with the Forest Orders. A current list is Attachment L or can be located at on the Los Padres National Forest external website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/lpnf/home/?cid=stelprdb5193333>).

### Emergency Closure

- This is a temporary Forest Order prohibiting entry to the Forest due to severe fire hazard and/or burning conditions. Emergency Closure is a measure to be used as a last resort when there is no other options available to protect Forest resources and/or provide for public safety.
- The Los Padres National Forest has no planned seasonal closure areas, although they could be implemented in the future.
- The Sespe and Sisquoc Condor Sanctuaries are both closed to entry year-round through other Forest Orders or legislation aimed at protecting the California Condor.

## IV Criteria for Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure

The entire Los Padres National Forest is classified as **high hazard**. This has been determined using the hazard area classification criteria as set forth in the Region 5 Fire Restriction and Emergency Closure Plan (FSH 5109.18).

In general the entire Forest will enter and exit the Fire Restrictions with the same order and timeframe. The Santa Lucia, Santa Barbara, Ojai, and Mount Pinos Districts will maintain the same level of Fire Restriction Level year-round. These four Districts are one contiguous land mass with little wide-spread variation in weather and fuel conditions. Having different Fire Restriction Levels is confusing to the public, our partners, and personnel plus it would be difficult to enforce different levels during the same time period. Given the Monterey District is a separate land mass north of the rest of the Forest, it may be prudent to consider a different Fire Restrictions than the other four Districts due to weather and fuel condition differences. And this separation makes implementation and enforcement more manageable.

The recommendation to increase or decrease fire restrictions should be evaluated by Fire Prevention Technicians, District Fire Management Officers and District Rangers periodically, utilizing the **Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure Matrix** (Appendix A). Districts will make recommendations to the Forest Fire Management Officer when conditions warrant a change in restrictions. The Forest Fire Management Officer will make the final recommendation to the Forest Supervisor for a decision.

### Implementation Criteria

- Fire Restrictions will be implemented on the Los Padres National Forest year-round. The specific restriction will be dictated by actual, measureable conditions such as: weather, live and dead fuel conditions, public use, etc., and will include the mitigation measures outlined in the **Fire Restriction Levels and Emergency Closure Matrix** (Appendix A). The Forest will at a minimum remain in compliance with the Regional Fire Use Restriction Order (Appendix M) and shall consider increasing or decreasing restrictions when specific criteria are met throughout the year. The Forest shall evaluate its current restrictions periodically to ensure that the specific criteria are still being met, and should decrease restriction levels when appropriate.
- The **Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure Matrix** (Appendix A) is intended as a guide to assist with mitigation implementation, but cannot foresee all circumstances.
- When extreme conditions persist throughout the Los Padres National Forest, consider remaining in the current restrictions until such time as conditions greatly improve.

### Collecting and compiling Fuel Moisture Data

- Each District Fire Management Officer (Division Chief) is responsible for ensuring their District has submitted timely and accurate live fuel moisture data to the Los Padres Communications Center (LPCC) year-round.
- Live fuel moisture data will be submitted to LPCC no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. In addition, for the months of April through December they will also be submitted no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. If High Fire Season continues beyond December, live fuel moisture data will be submitted twice a month until conditions warrant moving into Low Fire Season.
- Live fuel moisture data will be collected from the following established fuel sample sites:
  - Monterey District                      Ponderosa & South Fork
  - Santa Lucia District                      Buckhorn
  - Santa Barbara District                      Upper Oso & San Marcos
  - Ojai District                                      Oak Flat & Rose Valley
  - Mt. Pinos District                              Ozena & Hardluck
- LPCC Manager will be responsible to ensure, beginning no later than May 1<sup>st</sup>, the daily weather observations are entered into the WIMS program. This program produces the current burn index for the day and predicts it for the following day.
- LPCC Manager will be responsible to ensure the Burning Index data is collected on a daily basis and is posted to the [Los Padres Communication Center | Intelligence](#) website page.

### Cancellation Criteria

Fire Restrictions and Emergency Closure Orders should be written to expire at the end of each year (December 31<sup>st</sup>). This will set the Forest back to the default fire restrictions contained in the Regional Order and Public Resource Code. If conditions change prior to the end of the year, consider rescinding/terminating or deducing the fire restrictions. When one order is terminated another order can be enacted to increase or decrease restriction levels.

### V Coordination Procedures

- The District Fire Management Officers (Division Chiefs) will monitor fuel and weather data, anticipating potential restrictive action for their District and keep their District Ranger plus the Forest Fire Management Officer informed of current conditions.
- The Forest Fire Management Officer will alert the Forest Supervisor as the number of factors to consider or criteria are approached.
- District Rangers will notify their personnel of proposed implementation of fire restrictions to allow for adequate time to change signing and begin informing the public of the change to fire restriction mitigation measures.
- Adjacent Forests, Contract Counties, and CAL FIRE Ranger Units will be notified of proposed implementation of fire restrictions by either the Forest and/or District Fire Management Officer.
- The Forest Fire Management Officer will notify the Assistant Director of Southern California Geographic Area Coordination Center (South Ops GACC) about proposed implementation of fire restrictions.
- The Assistant Forest Fire Management Officer (Deputy) will work with Forest Order Point of Contact and the LE&I Patrol Captain after preparing the Memo to File and Forest Order for OGC review. Samples of each document for each fire restriction is included as Appendices to this plan.
- The Assistant Forest Fire Management Officer (Deputy) will work with the Forest Public Affairs Officer (PAO) on timely press release as Fire Restrictions change.
- LE&I Patrol Captain will seek OGC approval of the Forest Order and coordinate the Forest Supervisor's signature on Forest Orders.



## VI Information Coordination

### Fire Restrictions

When Fire Restrictions are increased or decreased, the following contacts will be made:

- Assistant Forest Fire Management Officer (Deputy) will:
  - Distribute signed Forest Order (preferably a color electronic copy) and Exhibits
  - Notify the Forest PAO
  - Notify adjacent Forest and Cooperators of the restrictions imposed
- LPCC Manager will ensure:
  - A broadcast advisory notice on Forest New for 3 consecutive days prior to implementation, if possible.
  - Notify South Ops GACC
- Forest Public Affairs Officer (PAO) will ensure:
  - Notify the Regional Officer of Information
  - Prepare and distribute new releases to media
  - Coordinate any Interagency Press releases
- District Rangers will:
  - Direct District Fire Management Officers (Division Chiefs) to have field personnel: post copies of the Forest Order; post restrictions signs or posters; and contact Forest users and public to advise them of the restrictions being imposed.
  - Direct District Fire Management Officers (Division Chiefs) to notify and coordinate activities with adjacent cooperating fire agencies and partners, ask for joint agency restrictive measures, if applicable.
  - Review all existing contracts and permits, with Public Uses, Lands and Engineering and invoke emergency measures as authorized in their Fire Plan portion of their Special Use Permits or Contract Operating Plans.

When restrictions are increased or decreased, personnel listed above will re-contact individuals/organizations and advise them of the change or termination.

### Emergency Closure

In the event an Emergency Closure is implemented the following contacts will be made:

- District Rangers will:
  - Direct District Fire Management Officer (Division Chiefs) to have available field personnel post “Closed to Entry” signs at entry points of affected areas.
  - Provide for maximum number of personnel to contact public users, patrol boundaries and corridors in the closed and adjacent areas.
  - Attempt to locate and remove recreationists from closed areas.
  - Suspend all force account work within closed areas.
  - Activate roadside information stations, as needed.
- The Forest Duty Officer will:
  - Make notifications listed under Fire Restriction section.
  - Coordinate placing requests for additional Prevention Patrols to provide support for the closed and adjacent areas, if funding supports the request.
- The Forest PAO will assume responsibility for new press releases to the media.

## **VII Material and Equipment Coordination**

The Chair of the Forest Prevention Group will coordinate requests for large or unexpected Forest Prevention Sign needs to the assigned Forest Prevention Officer. District supply dollar allocations include routine prevention program and sign needs.

Sign types, sizes, messaging, and locations will be identified the each District Sign Plan which is approved by the District Ranger.

To maximize limited funds, the Chair of the Forest Prevention Group is encouraged to coordinate each district on bulk sign or other prevention related purchases.

## **VIII Appendices**

Appendices are in separate attachments to this plan.

Appendix A – Forest Restrictions and Emergency Closure Matrix

Appendix B – Forest Order Checklist

Appendix C – Sample Memo to File for High Fire Danger Restrictions

Appendix D – Sample Forest Order for High Fire Danger Restrictions

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Appendix L – Designated Campfire Use Sites List

Appendix M – Regional Fire Use Restrictions Order