

Hunters: Keep fire precautions in mind

As hunters head out, they should keep fire precautions in mind. Even as fall approaches, officials warn, forests in many parts of the state remain very dry, and the danger of starting a wildfire persists.

Just as the seasonal transition occurs almost imperceptibly, wildfire season and hunting season often overlap. On an early morning in October, fire seems an unlikely visitor to the forest. But the cool temperatures and dew-laden grass deceive: A warming fire left smoldering on the hillside at dawn by a hunter watching for deer can flare up later when the afternoon sun dries out the grass.

Warming fires account for 43 percent of hunter-related wildfires on lands protected by the Oregon Department of Forestry. Unlike a campfire, a warming fire is temporary, providing relief from the chill as a hunter glasses the slopes for animal movement prior to actively pursuing game.

Smoking, the focus of fire prevention campaigns for decades, remains a major cause of fires in Oregon's forests. Twenty-nine percent of fires related to hunting activity result from smoking.

Twelve percent of wildfires caused by hunters come from campfires that have been built improperly or not fully extinguished.

Off-road vehicles pose a threat as well. Brief contact with shrubs or grass by a hot exhaust system is all it takes to start a wildfire.



Oregon hunters have a solid track record when it comes to fire safety in the woods. Over the past 10 years, hunter-caused fires accounted for only one percent of the total acres burned on lands protected by the department. But such fires often occur in remote areas where firefighter access is difficult.

Before heading afield, check local fire restrictions to find out if open fires are allowed. If so, clear vegetation from the fire site and make sure there are no overhanging tree limbs. Keep the fire small and monitor it at all times. At departure, drown the fire with water and stir the ashes, then repeat until it is completely out.

Check local rules to see if smoking is restricted. In some cases, it may be allowed only in closed vehicles and buildings. Whatever the situation, take extreme care with cigarettes and other smoking materials. It is illegal in Oregon to discard any lighted material, including cigarettes and matches.

Before a hunting trip, inspect the exhaust systems of ATVs and full-sized vehicles to ensure they are undamaged and functioning properly. Check the current rules to see if off-road driving or riding is allowed. If not, stay on established road-

ways, and avoid parking on the roadside, where grass may ignite from the exhaust. Always carry a fire extinguisher or water, and a shovel.

Information about local conditions and restrictions is available from department field offices. For a list, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/offices.shtml>.

Did You Know . . .

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joined forces with several groups and will be addressing computer viruses, spyware, ID theft, online predators, and more. In the coming months, McGruff will be "Guarding the Home Net" against scams and working with cyber-crime investigators. The "Take a Byte Out

of Cyber Crime" website can be found at www.bytecrime.org. On the site you can register for updates and access numerous tips, tools, and resources under the "content" tab. You can also click on the McGruff logo on the VPD website to access the site as well.

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Ike Says . . .

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led to radio collaring the calves just after birth and then determining their cause of death if they died. A couple of startling observations were made. The first was that 74% of calf mortality was caused by cougars. It was also determined that bears and coyote while a predator of calf elk, are not nearly as significant as cougar mortality. With the quick reaction of response teams to calves that had died, it was found that bears were taking over the kills of cougars, but were not the initial cause of death of the calves. It was observed through the study that hardly any calves were dying of mal-

nutrition. The study was conducted in the Wenaha and Sled Springs units. Both of these units are suffering from low calf recruitment into the herd and are in fact declining at a significant rate.

With the rifle season upon us, please remember to wear bright colors (blaze orange is the best) while in the outdoors. Being seen is a good thing, so be safe and have a good season.

**Izaak Walton League,
Nehalem Valley Chapter**
meets monthly on the 3rd
Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Call
503-429-7193 for location.