

# Official start to summer fire season starts Monday

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

The 2012 “fire season” will officially begin at 8am Monday, and fire officials urge residents, especially those living or recreating in rural areas, to use caution.

The state’s final snow survey May 1 found the snowpack water content is only 40 percent of normal. From January through April, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection crews responded to more than 800 wildfires, more than 2 1/2 times the approximately 300 the agency responded to during the same period in 2011. This year’s number also exceeds the five-year average of more than 600 wildfires for January through April, said Terri Mizuhara, spokeswoman for CalFire’s Amador-El Dorado Unit.

So far this month, she said, Cal Fire crews have responded to numerous small fires; several in Amador and El Dorado counties have been escaped-debris fires, Mizuhara said.

In response to the increased fire risk, CalFire’s Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit announced that it will increase staffing levels and is staffing many of its fire stations around the clock.

**Read the whole story**