

Opinion: Fire prevention is up to everyone

By Steve Burns

Two consecutive dry winters, including the driest January, February and March on record, may increase the potential for wildfire this summer. Help prevent wildfire in the Lake Tahoe Basin and surrounding areas by following these simple steps and please encourage others to do the same.

By working together, we can help protect our homes, the community and our public lands from wildfire.

Dispose of cigarette butts properly. Don't toss cigarettes out of car windows. Dispose of butts in the car's ashtray or a bottle of water.

If smoking outdoors, make sure to have a 3-foot clearance from anything flammable and grind the cigarette out in the dirt, not on a log or stump. Do not leave butts behind as litter.

Abide by campfire restrictions. When and where campfires are allowed, be sure to keep the fire to a manageable size and never leave unattended. Use water to extinguish the fire and make sure the ashes are cold to the touch before leaving. Remember, fires are not allowed on Forest Service beaches or in the general forest.

Leave fireworks to the professionals. Remember fireworks and sparklers are illegal in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Enjoy a public fireworks display instead of taking the risk that using illegal fireworks brings to you, our community, and the forest.

Be careful with propane and charcoal grills. Follow local ordinances on their use. Grills should be located away from

structures. For gas grills, make sure to turn off the knobs and the propane bottle when you're done. For charcoal grills, make sure the briquettes are cold before disposing of them.

Use spark arrestors. When operating equipment such as chain saws or leaf blowers, or operating vehicles such as tractors or motorcycles, make sure they have an approved spark arrestor.

Be careful to not park on vegetation. Parking on vegetation can cause a car's catalytic converter to spark a fire.

Comply with rules for burning residential debris. When residential burning is allowed, make sure to do it safely. Check with the local fire department on the day of the burn to confirm weather conditions are favorable. Burn in a cleared area, and never leave the fire unattended.

Prepare your home and property for wildfire with defensible space. Clear pine needles off roofs and make sure fuels such as wood or other flammable materials are not stored on or below decks. Remove flammable plants, such as junipers and other debris like dead vegetation, low hanging branches and rake pine needles. Learn more about defensible space by going online.

The Forest Service will likely implement fire restrictions this summer. For the up-to-date information on fire restrictions on National Forest System lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin, go online.

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