

Opinion: Power tools can trigger wildland fire

By Teri Mizuhara

Recently there have been a number of wildfires caused by people using gas powered equipment to create defensible space at the wrong time of day.

Using equipment such as tractors, lawn mowers or weed eaters at the wrong time of day can end disastrously. It is best to operate gas powered equipment before 10am and after 7pm when the humidity is higher and temperatures are cooler. This will lessen the chance of sparking a fire.

We understand that many people are taking advantage of this cooler than average weather and are outdoors creating additional defensible space around their homes. We want to encourage this, but at the same time we don't want folks to endanger themselves or their community.

Here are some tips to do the right thing the right way:

- Operate gas powered equipment before 10 in the morning or after 7 in the evening.
- Maintain your equipment in good working order to prevent carbon buildup which can cause a fire.
- Make sure you have a spark arrester and that it is in good shape.
- Allow all equipment to cool for a minimum of 15 minutes before refueling.
- Remove rocks from the area to be mowed, a metal blade from a mower striking a rock can cause a fire.

- Never mow dry grass with a mower designed to cut green grass, this is a common cause of fires which may not only result in a wildland fire, but often destroys your mower. The dry grass can get caught inside the mower and catch fire, leaving in its wake a trail of wildland fires and a fire in the engine compartment.
- Use a weed eater to mow dry grass and weeds.
- Have a shovel, fire extinguisher or other water source available and phone nearby in case you start a fire. Never hesitate to call 9-1-1, fires can get out of control quickly and threaten life and property in a matter of minutes.

Following these fire safety tips will allow you to work safely in your yard.

Thank you and have a fire safe summer.

Teri Mizuhara is public information officer for the CalFire unit that includes El Dorado County.