

# Opinion: Fire prevention begins at home

By Jeff Meston

Hot, dry drought conditions can create greater fire hazards than usual, and many people are unaware of just how easily a major wildfire can ignite. The city of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department wants you to stay safe, this summer, and offers these fire safety tips.

- Avoid outdoor burning, such as campfires, or any other open flame. Even grilling is not advised when extremely dry drought conditions exist.



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- Dispose of cigarettes and other smoking materials into fire safe containers. Tossing smoldering cigarettes onto the ground should be avoided.
- Properly store flammable materials such as gasoline, alcohol, paint, lighter, and matches. These materials may reach their critical points during hot weather and can possibly result to fire.
- Be extremely careful when using and fueling chain saws, lawn mowers, weed eaters and other lawn care equipment. High heat conditions make ignition of the fuel vapors more likely. Find shade if possible and allow the machinery to cool if it has

been running. Also avoid welding in dangerously dry conditions, as the sparks can easily ignite the dry vegetation around you.

- Be careful where you park your vehicles. The hot underside of a car or truck filled with gasoline parked over dead grass or leaves is an explosion waiting to happen. Be sure to park on concrete or solid dirt or gravel, especially during hot and dry drought conditions. Do not park where vegetation touches the vehicle.

- When traveling, be sure that vehicle, tires, and other moving parts (especially metal) are in excellent working order. Chains or other recreational trailer equipment must not drag or dangle from the truck, as these can become hot or create sparks causing not just one but multiple wildfires along your route. Look behind you as you're driving to make sure all is well. It's always a good idea to carry a fire extinguisher along on you trip.

- At home, create a "fire safety zone" around your house and other buildings. Fire moves more quickly up steep hills, so extend that zone in the event your hone is on a steep slope. Keep your entire landscape mowed, raked, and free of dead limbs.

- Before dangerous times arrive, take time to make sure there are fire extinguishers mounted in critical areas of the home, outbuildings, and all vehicles.

- Clear all needles and leaves from roofs, eaves and rain gutters, Trim branches 6 feet from the ground, Landscape with fire resistant/drought tolerant plants, that require little water.

*Jeff Meston is fire chief of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department.*