

Media Advisory – Aug. 15, 2008

Contact: Christopher Schwarzen

Office: 425-388-3883

Email: Christopher.Schwarzen@snoco.org

County's DEM urges wildfire prevention measures

Recent hot weather combined with dry land has increased the threat of urban wildfires this weekend, especially throughout Snohomish County and the Puget Sound, says Snohomish County's Department of Emergency Management (DEM).

DEM is encouraging individuals and families to take steps to prevent fires near their home and when they're out. Following the "Three C's" of "campfires, catalytic converters and cigarettes" can be enough to stop wildfires from happening here.

Out-of-control campfires can be the culprit behind a wildfire. Residents are asked first to be sure campfires are allowed, and then they are encouraged to take precautions for having one. Keep fires small and be sure to have water nearby should a campfire expand beyond control.

It only takes one spark to start a wildfire, and catalytic converters on automobiles and motorcycles can generate enough heat to start one. Always park in designated parking areas, and when you are parked, turn off the engine as soon as possible.

Cigarettes also are a leading cause of roadside wildfires. Tossing butts out of car windows is illegal and fines are stiff. Properly dispose of cigarettes after making sure they are no longer smoldering.

"Simple preventive measures can mean the difference between a dangerous fire and a safe weekend," said John Pennington, DEM's director. "Working together with neighbors to reduce the threat is also a good step to take."

Going Beyond the Three C's

Homeowners and business owners also can take steps to minimize damage should a wildfire occur in the area.

The roof and exterior structure of dwellings should be constructed of non-combustible or fire-resistant materials such as tile, slate, sheet iron, aluminum, brick or stone. Wood siding, cedar shakes, exterior wood paneling and other highly combustible materials should be treated with fire retardant chemicals.

Other steps include:

- Clean roof surfaces and gutters of pine needles, leaves, branches to avoid accumulation of flammable materials.

- Remove tree limbs extending within 10 feet of any stove opening or chimney.
- Maintain a screen constructed of non-flammable material over the flue opening of every chimney or stovepipe. Mesh openings of the screen should not exceed 1/2 inch.
- Landscape vegetation should be spaced so that fire cannot jump to surrounding vegetation.
- Store gasoline and propane tanks in approved containers away from occupied buildings.
- Garden hoses should be connected to outlets for quick use during a fire.
- Each home should have at least two different entrance and exit routes.
- Always call 911 when spotting a wildfire.

For further information on urban wildfire prevention, please contact the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management at 425-388-5060 or dem@snoco.org.

###