



Preparing for Fire Season

Spring is in the air; birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and fire managers are planning for the upcoming fire season. Among the efforts underway:

Predicting fire season: The start of fire season and the level of risk it brings depend on several factors: the timing and the amount of precipitation, whether it is rain or snow, when snowpack melts, unusually early warm temperatures and others. The southern Sierra Nevada has seen slightly below normal levels of precipitation while temperatures have been slightly above average. For the foothills, this could lead to earlier fire risk. Good snow pack means that a normal fire season is likely for the higher elevations. Remember, a normal year in the southern Sierra means hot, dry summers; the risk of fire is always a reality here.

These long-term predictions are informed estimates based on historic weather and fire patterns. As fire season approaches, better assessments can be made based on direct weather readings. Daily weather observations are used to determine the fire danger ratings (extreme to low fire danger) that are posted throughout the parks.

Seasonal hiring and training: Fire managers have hired their seasonal staffs for the engines, helicopter, and fire crews. While some are returning from last year, others may be coming from other national parks or agencies; and some are working their first fire season. Firefighters go through training to develop their ability to work together, communicate together, and practice standard interagency firefighting procedures.



Arrowhead Hotshots Roberto Garcia and Oscar Luna practice fire shelter deployments. This prepares a firefighter for a worst-case scenario -- needing to deploy a fire shelter (practice shelters are in their hands) if they can't reach a safe location and become trapped by an oncoming fire. NPS Photo by John Goss



Firefighter Mike Elles with Engine 72 stationed at the Three Rivers Hammond Station completing an equipment check.

NPS Photo by Deb Schweizer

Fire managers annually evaluate dispatch centers, test radio systems, and all fire response equipment. Each crew is evaluated through a readiness review that demonstrates they meet the standards for federal wildland fire response. This review is conducted by a qualified independent expert. He or she submits a report to the park superintendent detailing the results of these readiness reviews for each crew as well as for overall fire operations. These reviews are typically conducted in early June. This provides time for crews to train and work together and prove their competency in time for the upcoming fire season.

Response plans: The parks work with the county, state, and other federal fire agencies to ensure the best response during fire season. For example, in certain locations, the Sequoia National Forest can provide the quickest response to a fire on park land. In other locations, the parks may be the closest responder for the forest.

These plans are designed to recognize that response to any given area will differ depending on the fire hazard and risks. A lightning fire in the wilderness may only require monitoring. A front-country fire will bring a higher level of response.

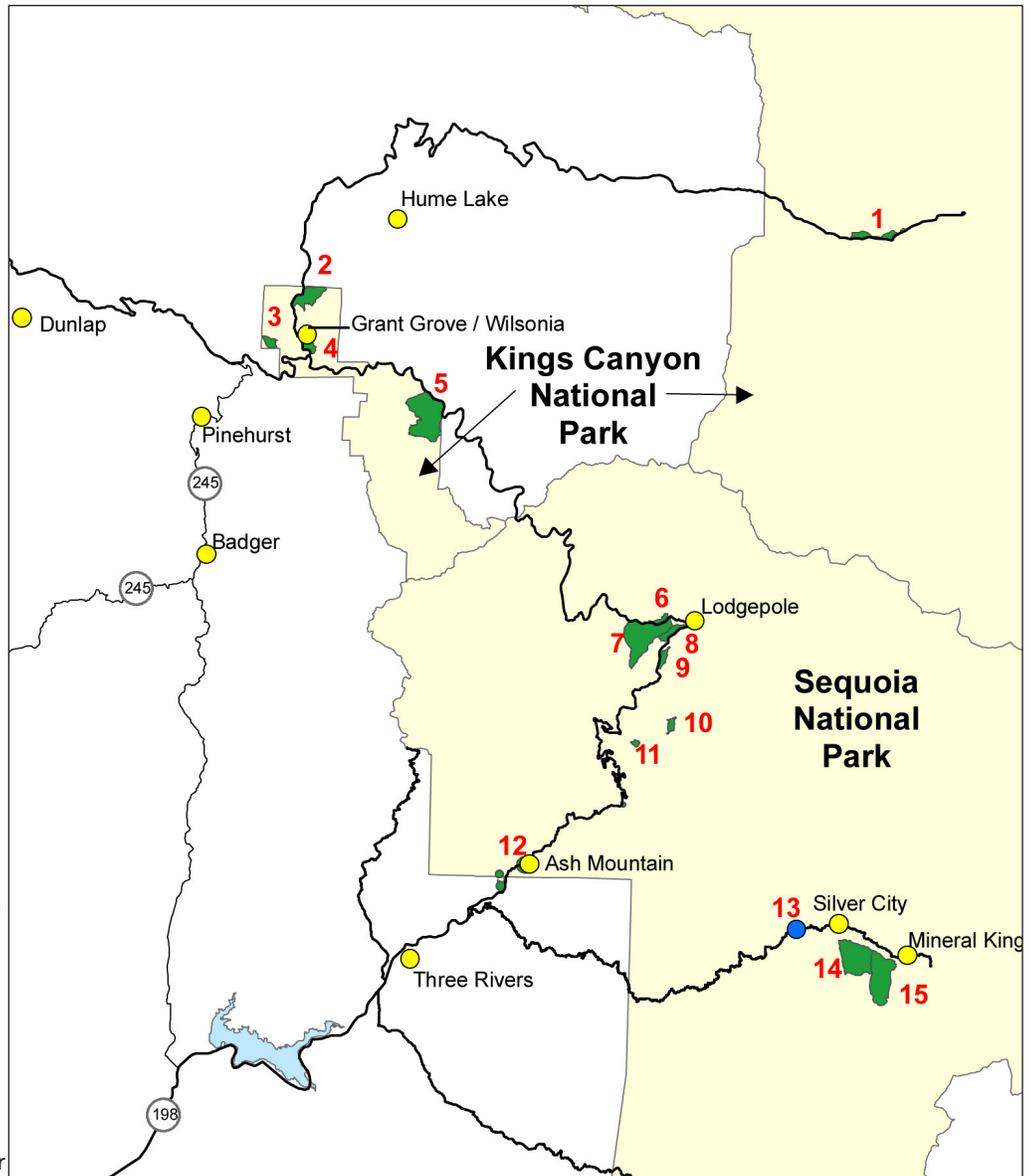
The plans evolve with the fire season. For example, a fire in May during low fire danger will have a different response than that same fire in August during high fire danger. Fire managers will, of course, make discretionary calls based upon their experience. However, the plans provide initial guidance to dispatch responders to a fire start.

Please refer to pages three and four of this brochure for tips on how *you* can plan for fire season.

Project Locations for 2009

The parks are planning **15 projects** this year totaling up to **3358 acres**. They are designed to improve protection of communities and restore or maintain forest health. Remember, the ultimate timing and completion of burns depends on air quality, local and national fire activity, fuel moistures, and weather.

- 1 Falls** (150 acres)
Early summer prescribed fire
- 2 North Boundary** (248 acres)
Fall prescribed fire
- 3 Ella** (70 acres)
Fall prescribed fire
- 4 Azalea** (64 acres)
Summer or fall prescribed fire
- 5 Hart** (802 acres)
Summer prescribed fire
- 6 Wuksachi** (39 acres)
Summer or fall prescribed fire
- 7 East Halstead** (718 acres)
Fall prescribed fire
- 8 Silliman Creek** (98 acres)
Summer prescribed fire
- 9 Quarry West** (45 acres)
Summer prescribed fire
- 10 Crescent Meadow** (52 acres)
Summer prescribed fire
- 11 Moro** (24 acres)
Summer prescribed Fire
- 12 Ash Mountain / Hospital Rock**
(25 acres) Spring/early summer prescribed fire
- 13 Atwell** (12 acres*)
Mechanical treatment
- 14 Fowler Creek** (573 Acres)
Fall prescribed fire
- 15 Mosquito** (599 Acres)
Fall prescribed fire



- Prescribed Fire Project
- Mechanical Thinning Project

* Mechanical projects will be completed if funding is available.

What About Lightning Fires?
Lightning fires are unplanned events. NPS crews are trained to respond quickly in these situations. When necessary, the parks shift priorities from planned projects to the management of lightning fires.

A Message from Cal Fire...

100' DEFENSIBLE SPACE Make Your Home FIRE SAFE

Why 100 Feet?

Following these simple steps can dramatically increase the chance of your home surviving a wildfire!

A **Defensible Space** of 100 feet around your home is required by law. The goal is to protect your home while providing a safe area for firefighters.

1 "Lean, Clean and Green Zone."

– Clearing an area of 30 feet immediately surrounding your home is critical. This area requires the greatest reduction in flammable vegetation.

2 "Reduced Fuel Zone."

– The fuel reduction zone in the remaining 70 feet (or to property line) will depend on the steepness of your property and the vegetation.

Spacing between plants improves the chance of stopping a wildfire before it destroys your home. You have two options in this area:

- a Create horizontal and vertical spacing between plants. The amount of space will depend on how steep the slope is and the size of the plants.
- b Large trees do not have to be cut and removed as long as all of the plants beneath them are removed. This eliminates a vertical "fire ladder."

When clearing vegetation, use care when operating equipment such as lawnmowers. One small spark may start a fire; a string trimmer is much safer.

Remove all build-up of needles and leaves from your roof and gutters. Keep tree limbs trimmed at least 10 feet from any chimneys and remove dead limbs that hang over your home or garage. The law also requires a screen over your chimney outlet of not more than ½ inch mesh.

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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List of Fire Projects for 2009

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[www.nps.gov/seki/naturescience/
fire.htm](http://www.nps.gov/seki/naturescience/fire.htm)

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Preparing for Fire Season *What Can You Do?*

While agencies throughout California prepare for fire season, home owners in fire-prone areas can do the same. Completing defensible space to the state standards dramatically increases the chances of your home surviving a wildfire as well as creating a safer environment for firefighters who respond. These standards are listed on page three of this brochure.

Building or remodeling your home with materials engineered to be more fire resistant (metal or tile roofs, for example) also greatly improves your homes ability to withstand wildfire. For more guidance, visit <http://www.firesafecouncil.org/education/insideout/firesafebig4.html>.

Homeowners should also have their family evacuation plans in place. Be sure to plan for your pets (including horses) in the event of a wildfire. Visit [http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact_sheets/
Evacuation.pdf](http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/downloads/fact_sheets/Evacuation.pdf) for a checklist to help you prepare in the event of an evacuation.