



Zion National Park Fire Management



Exotic Plants Create Fire Concerns in Zion National Park

While it's true that April showers bring May flowers, in Zion Canyon April showers also bring Cheatgrass and Rip-gut Brome, two exotic grass species. Late April rains in Zion this year brought a flush of new growth to the canyon floor. In places, this sea of waving green grass was up to waist high, something not seen in Zion for many years (mainly due to the five-year drought we are experiencing). But now, with canyon temperatures near 100° F for the last few weeks, this sea of green has become a sea of brown. With the curing out of this exotic vegetation comes an increased danger from wildland fire. To combat this problem Fire Management Officials from Zion have instituted campfire and smoking restrictions and are working closely with Maintenance and Resource Management Divisions to institute treatment methods to lessen the fire risks around structures and provide a safer environment for our visitors.

The treatment work is being done by mechanical methods, with Fire Management working closely with the Maintenance Division. Fuel breaks are being cut wherever possible with a small tractor and brush mower. To date, over 35-acres of vegetation has been mowed by the Maintenance Division. Since park personnel cannot possibly mow the entire canyon floor, they are concentrating their efforts along the road corridor, campgrounds and around Zion Lodge and other park structures. These wide (6-feet and over) fuel breaks may not totally stop a wildland fire, but they should slow it enough that firefighters will have a chance to contain it. Fire Management personnel are also using weed-eaters around buildings where a mower cannot access to provide defensible space for firefighters and equipment in case of a wildland fire.

It's always good to receive moisture in Zion Canyon, but sometimes the timing of these rains can cause additional concerns for Fire Managers. These concerns can be addressed though by working cooperatively with other park divisions to mitigate the danger from wildland fire.



Canyon before treatment



Canyon after treatment



Cabin before treatment



Cabin after treatment