

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Wet Spring Brings Hidden Dangers for Memorial Day Weekend CAL FIRE Officials Stress Safety

Sacramento – This spring’s above average rainfall has led to an abundance of grass, brush and water throughout the state. While the weather is ideal for Californians and tourists to enjoy recreating in the outdoors, CAL FIRE officials are reminding everyone of the importance of safety this holiday weekend.

Despite rain as recent as this week, the grass and brush in many areas has begun to dry out and is becoming increasingly flammable. CAL FIRE crews have already seen an increase in the number of wildfires, even with the late rain. “Many people don’t realize that most of the low lying grass only takes an hour to dry out,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, acting director of CAL FIRE. “This weekend’s weather forecast appears to be great for outdoor activities, but people still need to be cautious this time of year, because the grass can burn.”

Wildfires are not the only danger posed by the outdoors; drownings also dramatically increase during the Memorial Day weekend. “All the runoff from this winter’s storms has increased the amount of water and flow in our rivers and lakes,” said Chief Pimlott. In California, drowning is the leading cause of deaths among children under 14, and every year CAL FIRE responds to water rescues across the state, many of which tragically claim the lives of both adults and children.

CAL FIRE would like everyone to remember these important steps this holiday:

Camping:

- Obtain necessary permits needed for campfires
- Clear away grass, leaves and other debris within a 10-foot perimeter of any campfire
- Have a responsible person in attendance at all times
- Ensure all campfires are completely extinguished before leaving
- When barbecuing, never leave the grill unattended

In the Water:

- Always wear a life jacket!
- Children should always be supervised by a responsible adult
- Never swim alone
- Drinking and swimming is just as dangerous as drinking and driving.

For more ways to be safe during the Memorial Day Weekend visit the CAL FIRE website at www.fire.ca.gov.