Wildfire Prevention Sign and Poster Guide
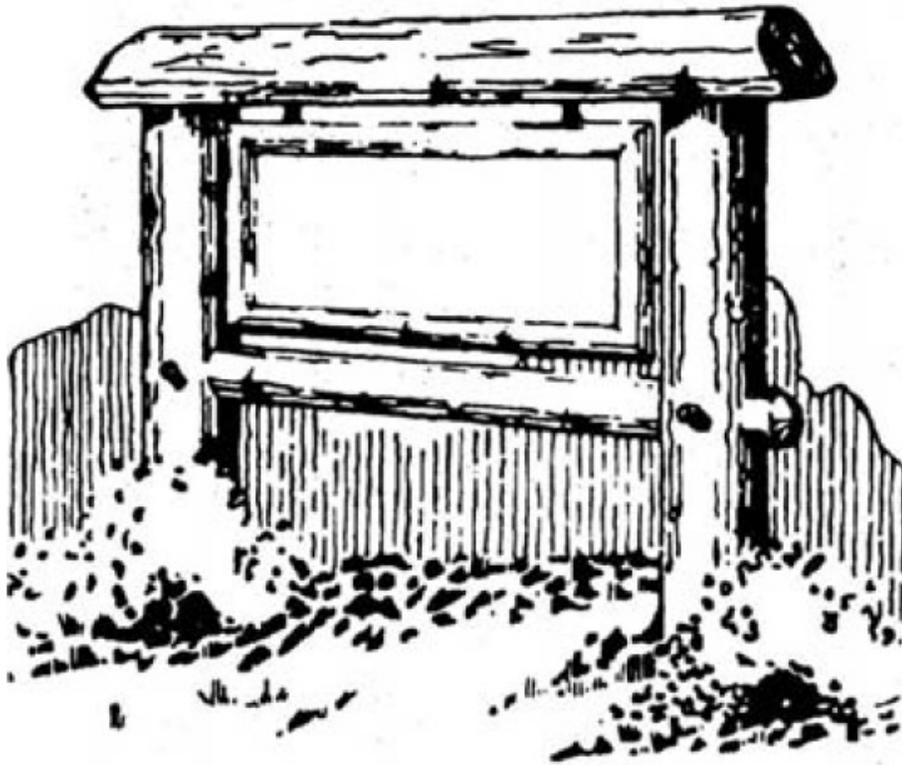
Fire Danger Rating Signs   5.0

Introduction

Fire Danger Rating Signs provide a method of informing wildland visitors of the fire danger on those lands. These signs also help to identify the administrative unit responsible for managing and protecting resources on those lands. Some wildland units may have their own specially designed fire danger signs so be sure to follow your employer's direction.

Placement

Fire Danger Rating Signs should be located in areas where the public needs to be informed of potentially dangerous fire conditions. Typical locations for placement of fire danger rating signs are at administrative offices, visitor centers, near administrative boundaries, and large recreation complexes. Signs should not compete or conflict with the adjoining organization's fire danger signs. Fire danger rating of a large area should be coordinated between the responsible protection organizations. A clear and coordinated message provides for less confusion and better public compliance.

Select sites that are easily visible and maintainable. The ratings require daily updates to be accurate and therefore effective. A fire danger rating sign that does not accurately reflect the actual fire conditions on a daily basis will damage the credibility of both the administrative unit and the fire prevention program.

Consider local area volunteers to daily update the fire danger rating. Other options include cooperative agreements with your adjoining protection organizations.

National Fire Danger Rating System

In 1974, State Forestry Organizations, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service established standard adjective descriptions for five levels of fire danger to be used in public information releases and fire prevention signing. These adjective levels and color codes are described below. For more information on the National Fire Danger Rating System, obtain a copy of the NWCG publication, "Gaining an Understanding of the National Fire Danger Rating System", PMS 932, NFES 2665, July 2002.

Fire Danger Rating and Color Code	Description *Gaining an Understanding of the National Fire Danger Rating System, page 30, NFES 2665, July 2002*
Low (L) (Green)	Fuels do not ignite readily from small firebrands although a more intense heat source, such as lightning, may start fires in duff or punky wood. Fires in open cured grasslands may burn freely a few hours after rain, but woods fires spread slowly by creeping or smoldering and burn in irregular fingers. There is little danger of spotting.
Moderate (M) (Blue)	Fire can start from most accidental causes but with the exception of lightning fires in some areas the number of starts is generally low. Fires in open cured grasslands will burn briskly and spread rapidly on windy days. Timber fires spread slowly to moderately fast. The average fire is of moderate intensity although heavy concentrations of fuel, especially draped fuel, may burn hot. Short-distance spotting may occur, but is not persistent. Fires are not likely to become serious and control is relatively easy.
High (H) (Yellow)	All fine dead fuels ignite readily and fires start easily from most causes. Unattended brush and campfires are likely to escape. Fires spread rapidly and short-distance spotting is common. High-intensity burning may develop on slopes or in concentrations of fine fuels. Fires may become serious and their control difficult unless they are attacked successfully while small.

Very High (VH) (Orange)	Fires start easily from all causes and, immediately after ignition, spread rapidly and increase quickly in intensity. Spot fires are a constant danger. Fires burning in light fuels may quickly develop high intensity characteristics such as long-distance spotting and fire whirlwinds when they burn into heavier fuels.
Extreme (E) (Red)`	Fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious. Development into high intensity burning will usually be faster and occur from smaller fires than in the very high fire danger class. Direct attack is rarely possible and may be dangerous except immediately after ignition. Fires that develop headway in heavy slash or in conifer stands may be unmanageable while the extreme burning condition lasts. Under these conditions the only effective and safe control action is on the flanks until the weather changes or the fuel supply lessens.

Fire Danger Rating Sign Styles

Fire Wheel Rating Sign

There are a number of versions and sizes of the fire wheel rating sign. This style of sign may be painted, silk screened, or applied as a decal to the substrate material. High density overlay (HDO) plywood is a good choice for your substrate. An arrow is used to point to the fire danger for the day. In order to deter vandalism it is a good idea to be able to lock the arrow in place on the rear of the sign.

Use the NFDRS color codes for the five different colors of the rainbow. 1) Low (green), 2) Moderate (blue), 3) High (yellow), 4) Very High (orange), 5) Extreme (Red).

Smokey Bear Fire Danger Sign

A color decal reproduction of Smokey Bear and the five fire danger adjectives are available from the National Symbols Web Catalog, http://www.symbols.gov. There are several decals available:
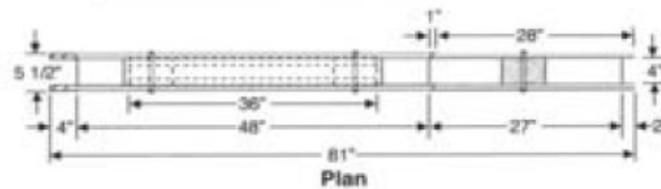
- NFES 92016   Smokey with shovel in left hand
- NFES 92017   Smokey with shovel in right hand
- NFES 92018   Fire Danger Adjectives

If your sign location site is two-sided you will need to order two sets of adjectives and a right and a left hand Smokey. Construction plans come with your decal order. It is very important to apply the decal to high density overlay (HDO) plywood. HDO plywood is marine-quality ¾" plywood with one side covered with a smooth porous overlay. It weathers well and the overlay material provides a stable surface to which the decal will bond. The local lumber yard may not keep this in stock but will know what to order when you ask for it.

A list of State and USDA Forest Service representatives is located on the symbols.gov website. In order to place an order with symbols.gov you will need to contact your local state or federal representative for a user name and password.

You may also be able to find other licensed sources of fire danger sign manufacturers on the National Symbols Website.

Smokey Bear Fire Danger Rating Sign

Note: For single faced sign, make modifications as required, but maintain box-frame construction.

Text layout colors are reversed for clarity.

Text layout colors in the plan are reversed for clarity.

- Routed letters – Yellow cream # 23695
- Background – Brown # 20059

FIRE DANGER

6"

TODAY!

8"

PREVENT WILDFIRES

4"