



**RELEASE AFTER 6/30/03**

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## **Fire Season Heats up in the East Bay**

Summer fire season is here – which means the possibility of “Red Flag Days”.

On exceptionally hot days, in conjunction with the National Weather Service, the California Department of Forestry may declare a "fire weather watch" or "red flag warning." Fire weather includes high winds, high temperatures and low humidity.

Local fire agencies are preparing for summer fire weather by increasing patrols and inspecting high fire areas. Residents can prepare for high fire days by clearing flammable vegetation away from their homes and structures, removing vines, pruning branches and shrubs, trimming tree branches, clearing the area of leaves and brush, and cutting the grass.

A "fire weather watch" is called when the forecast is for high temperatures and high winds from the west, across the dry interior of the Bay Area. The drying winds increase the chances of a fire igniting and spreading rapidly. Wind gusts results in erratic fire behavior.

When the critical conditions are met, "red flag warnings" are issued and East Bay fire agencies go on special alert. Responses may include additional patrols in the hills, restrictions on the use of barbecues in parks, or the actual closing of parks. Local news media are alerted to remind communities about the increased fire danger, and special signs may be posted to indicate high fire hazard conditions.

During a red flag warning, residents and visitors should be especially alert and obey all posted closure or warning signs. This includes being extra cautious with potential ignition sources, such as cigarettes or barbecues. Another common ignition sources are the hot catalytic converters on many car's exhaust systems and small power equipment, such as lawn mowers, weed eaters or chain saws, that could spark a fire.

For more information on vegetation management and fire safety, call the Hills Emergency Forum at (510) 893-9888.

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