



BLM News



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For Immediate Release

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FIRE OFFICIALS TAKE AIM AT TARGET SHOOTING A LITTLE KNOWN CAUSE OF WILDFIRES

Salt Lake City, Utah...October 20, 2004... Fire officials of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Salt Lake Field Office report that in 2004 a surprising one-fourth of the human-caused wildfires were started by target shooting within its wildfire protection area. Double the number from previous years, these fires have occurred when target shooting and sighting-in firearms. It is generally unknown to target shooters that wildfires can and, in fact, do start from this activity. In all, the year's target shooting wildfires consumed over 1,000 acres of public, state, and private land. BLM expended almost \$400,000 in suppression, stabilization and rehabilitation that could have been prevented. The counties, State of Utah and Forest Service also spent funds on these fires.

According to the Assistant Field Manager for Fire, Fuels and Aviation, Jeff Kline, the majority of these fires were adjacent to subdivisions or other developments near West Mountain and Lake Mountain in Utah County and parts of northern Tooele County. "Target shooting fires are uncommon, but we've found that concentrated and frequent target shooting combined with the fuel, topography, and weather conditions in these areas are the right conditions for this type of ignition and fire to spread quickly," said Kline. "We investigate the cause of every human-caused fire we respond to, and are concerned to see so many wildfires associated with target shooting this year," added Kline.

The Field Office is hoping to raise awareness of this wildfire risk. Target-shooting wildfires cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in suppression and land stabilization and rehabilitation. In addition, the responsible parties may be held liable for these costs. You place yourself, friends, and family at risk of being injured from a fast spreading wildfire if you are not prepared. Taking precautions is worth your time.

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TARGET SHOOTING 2

Here are some tips to keep in mind for next year to prevent wildfires:

- Choose locations with little or no vegetation that can carry a wildfire.
- Choose your targets carefully. Shooting at rocks, at targets within rocky areas, or at metal objects can increase the chance of a spark.
- Be aware of the ammunition you are using. Tracer rounds are illegal to use in Utah. Full metal jacketed ammunition may increase the risk of a fire.
- As an extra measure of safety bring a shovel, extra water, and a fire extinguisher rated ABC (includes woody fuels) in your vehicle with you. These are good to have with you whenever you use public lands because wildfires can occur in other ways such as from vehicles, campfires, model rockets, and chainsaws, to name a few.
- Make sure you take your targets, shells, and other trash with you when you go. You may be cited for littering if you do not.

-<http://www.utahfireinfo.gov>.-