

Great Basin Coordination Center

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Updated July 14, 2017

Subject: Extraordinary fine fuel loading and continuity, along with very low fuel moisture contributing to extreme fire behavior and high resistance to control across Central and Northern Nevada, Northern and Western Utah and Southern Idaho.

Discussion: A very wet winter across Western and Northern Nevada into Northern Utah and Southern Idaho has produced tremendous fine fuel loading and continuity in the lower elevations. Fine fuel loadings are 200-300% above average across much of the advisory area. Recent large fires in Northern Nevada and Utah have displayed extreme fire behavior and a high resistance to control. Very hot and dry conditions over the last few weeks have caused live and dead fuel moisture to rapidly decrease to critical levels.

Lightning will increase across Nevada, Utah and Idaho through early next week with the continued pulses of monsoon moisture around the periphery of high pressure bringing drier lightning to these areas. The likelihood of new fire starts showing rapid growth and extreme fire behavior is high. **Energy Release Components (ERC) across Northern Nevada, Northern and Western Utah and parts of Southern Idaho are well above normal for early July and close to records for the time of year in some areas. Despite lower ERCs over Western Nevada, fires have shown rapid growth in the absence of wind and have been resistant to control due to the very high grass load.**

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- Anticipate rapid rates-of-spread, even in the absence of slope and wind. **You can't out run it!**
- Anticipate flashy fine fuels and pinyon-juniper to ignite easily and exhibit **advanced rates of spread, elongated flaming fronts and increasing fire brands; expect more long range spotting.**
- Anticipate dust devils and fire whirls to develop in hot, dry and unstable conditions, especially in fine flashy fuels, that may jeopardize control lines and contribute to erratic fire behavior.
- Anticipate large areas to be consumed in a short time periods, even in low slope and low wind conditions.
- Expect longer burn periods at mid to higher elevations.
- Fine fuel loadings are dense and continuous and will support extreme rates of spread regardless of fuel heights.
- Thunderstorms may produce strong outflow winds that may rapidly increase fire behavior and change spread direction.
- Fire behavior will burn the fine flashy fuels leaving some shrub components or perennials until the live fuel moisture values drop below critical levels. **Watch out for re-burn situations even in grass fuels!**

Mitigation Measures:

- Ensure thorough briefings for all fire resources, especially those from outside the local area.
- Modify tactics to account for potential high rapid rates of spread and high resistance to control.
- Communicate retardant drop effectiveness and modify as necessary; higher coverage levels or altered tactics may be required.
- Park all vehicles in clean, cold black; avoid driving or parking in unburned fuels.
- Ensure solid anchor points – keep one foot in the black.
- Constantly re-evaluate LCES – Lookouts – Communications – Escape Routes – Safety Zones.
- Monitor weather for thunderstorms that may produce strong outflow winds.
- Consult the latest weather and fire danger information at <http://gacc.nifc.gov/gbcc/>.

Area of Concern: Areas of concern include all of Central and Northern Nevada, Northern and Western Utah, and Southern Idaho especially in the low to mid elevations in heavy and continuous fine fuel loading and sagebrush.