TIMBER MESA FIRE & MEDICAL DISTRICT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Timber Mesa Fire and Medical District
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Stage 1 Fire Restrictions in Effect to Protect Our Community

White Mountains, Arizona – Due to record-breaking dry conditions, Stage 1 Fire Restrictions are now in place across our region. This decision is not made lightly but is based on extensive data analysis, careful consideration, and a thorough voting process among fire officials, land managers, and emergency officials who assess wildfire risk in real time. Our region is currently drier than it was in 2002 during the Rodeo-Chediski Fire and in 2011 during the Wallow Fire – two of the most devasting wildfires in Arizona history. These restrictions are a proactive step to prevent new fires from starting and spreading rapidly, threatening lives, homes, and our forests.

How Fire Restrictions Are Determined

Fire restriction decisions are not decided on a whim. They are carefully considered based on a variety of scientific and environmental factors that indicate wildfire danger. The White Mountain Fire Coordinating Group, composed of fire professionals, land management agencies, and emergency officials review multiple factors before voting on whether restrictions are necessary. Some of the key considerations include:

- Fuel Moisture Levels – This refers to how much moisture is present in vegetation, such as grasses, brush, and trees. Right now, those moisture levels are critically low, meaning wildfires can start easily and spread rapidly.
- Weather Patterns – High temperatures, strong winds, and low humidity all play a role in wildfire risk. This is typically when you see a Red Flag Warning when we are not in restrictions. With no significant moisture in the forecast, conditions are primed for fire activity.
- Drought Conditions – Long-term precipitation trends are analyzed to determine how much moisture the land has received over time. Even if we receive a small amount of precipitation, it does not undo months of extreme dryness. Each year, we usually have a snowpack to rely on. Due to receiving little to no snow, we are in record setting drought conditions per the National Weather Service.
- Wildfire Activity and Resources – Existing fire activity is considered to determine if firefighting resources are already stretched thin and whether additional fires would strain our ability to respond effectively.

After carefully reviewing these factors, the voting group determines whether fire restrictions should be implemented or lifted. Once a decision is made, we abide by it to ensure a coordinated, community-wide effort to reduce wildfire risk.

Why We Don't Lift Restrictions After a Single Storm
One of the most common questions we receive is, "Why do restrictions remain in place when we get snow or rain?" The answer is simple – one storm does not reverse months of extreme dryness.

When light rain or brief snowfall occurs, the surface may appear damp, but this moisture evaporates quickly in our dry climate. The ground, trees, and vegetation remain dangerously dry, leaving conditions just as hazardous as before. If we were to lift restrictions for just one day, only to reinstate them shortly after, it would create confusion for the public, inconsistency in enforcement, and an increased risk of human-caused wildfires. Keeping restrictions in place until conditions truly improve ensures clarity, consistency, and most importantly – safety.

Our Community Plays a Key Role in Wildfire Prevention
We recognize that fire restrictions can be an inconvenience, but your cooperation is crucial in preventing wildfires. In just 2024 alone, the National Interagency Fire Center recorded 64,897 wildland fires in the U.S., and 89.3 percent of those were caused by humans. By following fire restrictions, you are directly contributing to the safety of our community, homes, and forests.

"It will take a commitment from all of us to reduce the risk of wildfire loss in the communities of the White Mountains", said Fire Chief Randy Chevalier. "Our vision is a community prepared for the challenges of tomorrow. One of our most significant challenges we face is the risk of wildfire. We cannot achieve our mission without the help of our entire community."

We want to extend our gratitude to each of you for your patience, understanding, and commitment to fire safety. Fire season is a challenge we face together, and every action – big or small – helps prevent another devastating wildfire.

For updates on fire restrictions and wildfire safety, please visit timbermesafire.org or contact our Administration office at (928) 537-5100.