



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

# LARRY CRAIG

NEWS RELEASE

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**Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires**  
**by: Senator Larry Craig**

*“Only you can prevent forest fires”* is the longest running public service campaign in U.S. history. Smokey the Bear has been advocating fire safety since 1944, and today his message is as important as ever, as more and more acres burn each year.

Sadly, parts of the United States already are ablaze. More than 2.6 million acres have gone up in flames in recent weeks – most in northern California. But fire season also has started in southwestern Idaho, where lightning strikes have sparked small blazes. Fortunately our talented and hard working fire crews have kept them under control, but I worry that soon Idaho will be experiencing hot fires that inevitably will spread.

Last year Idaho suffered more charred acreage than any other State. Of the 9.4 million acres burned in our country in 2007, 2.2 million scorched acres were in Idaho. The Murphy Complex Fire in southern Idaho alone covered more than 650,000 acres.

Most fires are naturally caused, but some are caused by humans and can be prevented. Many fires are started by things as simple as: campfires that are not properly extinguished, trash left behind to fuel a fire, sparks that fly from equipment such as lawn mowers and ATVs, charcoal embers from a BBQ pit and cigarettes. There are preventive measures we all can take to avoid these accidents, like throwing water on our campfires and BBQ coals; and burning trash, mowing our yards or riding our ATVs on days that are not overly hot and dry. And don't forget to put out cigarettes in a safe manner.

Prevention doesn't just stop there, though. There are things Congress should be doing to prevent the severity of wildfires. This Congress should address the lack of funding for hazardous fuel reductions, wildfire prevention, and assistance to State agencies for fire prevention and suppression, but that's not happening. I have introduced several forestry management and fire safety legislative provisions, but my colleagues seem more concerned with forestry practices abroad. Our forests here at home are suffering for it.

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Idahoans live in the most beautiful State in the nation. We are a State that thrives on recreation, and many Americans come to Idaho to experience its splendor as well. It is up to us to protect it as much as we can, so everyone can continue to enjoy it.

I hope that this summer you and your family get out and enjoy Idaho's beautiful outdoors. But whether it's hiking in the Boise Foothills or camping at Lava Hot Springs, fly fishing on the South Fork of the Snake River, boating on Lake Pend Oreille, horseback riding in the Bitterroot National Forest, biking on the Hiawatha Trail, riding your ATV near Fairfield, or just visiting Craters of the Moon, the Bruneau Sand Dunes or the City of Rocks – please be careful and responsible. From your campsite to your very own back yard, take care of our home State. I promise that I'll keep doing my part in pushing Congress to do the same.

For more information on how to prevent wildfires, visit [www.smokeybear.com](http://www.smokeybear.com). For more information on how to protect your home from a wildfire, visit [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).