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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 31, 2018

For more information,
please contact:
San Juan County Fire Department,
505-334-1180

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Juan County Enacts a Ban on Open Burning

San Juan County, NM – On Tuesday, May 22, in a meeting of the San Juan County Commissioners, Resolution No. 17-18-46 was approved which enacts a banning of open burning in San Juan County.

San Juan Fire Chief Craig Daugherty presented information to the commission regarding the severe nature of the drought conditions in and around the County. “The National Weather Service, as well as the US Department of Agriculture have published their respective drought projections, which show the majority of San Juan County in *Extreme* and *Exceptional* drought condition. This is the most severe ranking for drought in both programs.” Chief Daugherty went on to describe a scenario that includes record heat and low precipitation that are reaching or have reached historic levels.

Chief Daugherty, “New Mexico statutes allow counties to issue a ban on burning when it is deemed “to be an immediate danger to public, health, safety and welfare of the county”. Staff feels this action is in the best interest of the public we serve and that conditions are at a point where this is necessary to keep human-caused fires to a minimum”.

The San Juan County Fire Ban includes:

1. Open burning, including burning of crop land, fields, range land, debris burning, slash piles, prescribed burning, or weed burning.
2. Campfires, except where cooking or heating devices use kerosene with gas or propane as a fuel in an improved camping area that is clear of flammable vegetation for at least 30 feet or within a residential yard. Within a residential yard, charcoal may be utilized in a cooking device. However, charcoal may not be disposed of in any fashion until the charcoal is cool enough to handle with bare hands.
3. Smoking is prohibited except in enclosed buildings, within vehicles equipped with ash trays, or on paved or surface roads or within a private yard; provided, however, that cigarette butts and cigar butts must be extinguished in ash trays.
4. The use of fireworks is prohibited in any area covered wholly or in part with timber, bush, grass, or other flammable vegetation. Fireworks may be utilized only in accordance with the San Juan County Fireworks Proclamation dated May 1, 2018, which is extended until further notice.

5. All devices using internal combustion engines must have a proper spark arrester installed. "Hot" vehicles must not be parked off pavement in areas with combustible vegetation.
6. Cutting or grinding metal or using a welder, either arc or gas, or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame, except in areas cleared of flammable materials at least 10 feet in diameter and equipped with a chemical pressurized fire extinguisher of not less than 10 pounds capacity.
7. Discharging, using, or possessing any combustible or explosive composition.
8. Operating a chain saw without a USDA or SAE approved spark arrester properly installed and working and having a chemical fire extinguisher on site of not less than 10 pounds capacity by weight.
9. The burning of rubbish, which has been illegal in the State of New Mexico since 2003 per State statute.

Watch for updates regarding the burn ban on the County's Facebook page and web site; www.sjcounty.net.

Please direct all inquiries regarding the specifics of the fire ban to the San Juan County Fire Dept., 505-334-1180.

Please direct all press related inquiries to Susan Hakanson, San Juan County Public Relations Manager, at shakanson@sjcounty.net or 505-386-8325.

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