

California

Fuels and Fire Behavior Advisory

Subject: Low dead fuel moistures, localized frost kill of brush species, combined with early green-up and curing of live fuels creates the potential for active fire behavior in much of the state.

Discussion: With the exception of the northwest corner of the state, most of California is experiencing varying degrees of drought, from moderate in the north to severe and extreme in southern California. Effects of localized freeze damage and lower than normal live and dead fuel moistures are the focus of this advisory.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public:

- A reduced snow pack due to below normal winter precipitation and generally above normal temperatures has resulted in early green-up and curing of live fuels at all elevations. The increase in live fuel moisture that would be expected this time of year has been measured at reduced levels in the north with almost non-existent increase in the south. **Do not expect fires to exhibit reduced fire behavior when entering areas of live fuels.**
- In December and January, California experienced short periods of very cold temperatures that resulted in freeze-killed vegetation. Native chaparral brush species (primarily manzanita) throughout the state were affected along with non-native or ornamental species, found primarily in the interface areas. **The dead fuel component that has been added to the brush will contribute to more active fire behavior.**
- Both live and dead fuel moistures are 3-6 weeks ahead of last years drying rates. Low 1000 hour fuel moistures have been evidenced by complete consumption on recent fires. **Anticipate increased spread rates and spotting along with more active nighttime burning.**

Mitigation Measures:

- Local and inbound fire personnel need to develop situational awareness of the conditions represented in this advisory. Details on site specific conditions regarding low fuel moistures or disease and freeze-killed vegetation should be covered during briefings.
- Ensure firefighters have good anchor points, escape routes, and safety zones.
- Consult the latest Fire Weather Forecasts, Monthly Fire Weather / Fire Danger Outlooks, Pocket Cards, and the recently updated California Fire Season Assessment (July-October) posted at:

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/oncc/predictive/index.htm>

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/oscc/predictive/index.htm>

Area of Concern: The area of concern covers most of California. A map showing the areas of concern described in this advisory can be found at:

http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/fuels_fire-danger/fuels_advisories.htm