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**(S.D.)-Fire Crews Burn Piles Across The Black Hills National Forest**



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 01/17/2013 08:50 AM

(CUSTER, S.D.)-Seeing and smelling smoke in the days ahead is a sign that forest managers are working to reduce hazardous fuels.

This week, districts across the Black Hills National Forest are focusing efforts on burning hand and machine slash piles. Piles are created from timber sale slash and tree thinning operations. Black Hills National Forest Fire Management Officer Todd Pechota says, "Fire managers require at least two inches of snow on the ground before they burn piles. It is very important to reduce fire and insect hazards by reducing fuel buildup. With the recent snowfall and extended forecast, conditions are ideal for reducing these forest fuels through pile burning."

Smoke will be visible and may impact local communities across the Black Hills for the next several weeks. Smoldering material may continue to burn days after burning operations are completed. Crews will continue to burn as conditions permit. Firefighters will continually monitor and check the piles for several days after they have been lit.

"We appreciate the support from the communities," says Gwen Lipp, Fire Management Officer for the Hell Canyon Ranger District. "Being able to reduce these fuels this time of year makes fire suppression operations safer during the summer months."

Burning operations will continue throughout the winter as conditions permit.  
For more information, visit [www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills).