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News Release

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Officials to Lift Castle Fire Closure on the North Kaibab Ranger District

FREDONIA, Ariz., Sept. 13, 2019 --Effective today, the Kaibab National Forest will lift the area closure around the Castle Fire that has been in place since the lightning caused wildfire started in mid-July.

Members of the public can now access the area, which had been closed due to public safety during ongoing fire operations, including areas of active fire, and the presence of firefighting equipment and personnel. The public is advised to have heightened awareness about potential safety hazards and exercise increased vigilance regarding personal safety.

"The district was very successful at restoring fire into a fire dependent ecosystem, which will greatly reduce the risk of future catastrophic wildfire and improve overall forest health," said North Kaibab District Ranger Randall Walker. "We now believe it is appropriate to lift the closure and allow the public to resume activities in the area such as hunting and fuelwood gathering, but that doesn't mean hazards don't exist. We urge the public to understand the potential hazards and to prepare accordingly. We want them to be able to use their public lands but we want them to do it safely, recognizing that any area recently impacted by wildfire will likely have some greater risk than other areas."

Potential risks in any area recently burned by wildfire include the following:

- Burned out stump holes that could cause injury if stepped in;
- Unstable terrain with potential for rolling debris (boulders, logs, rocks, etc.);
- Unsound burned trees (snags) that could fall or drop large limbs;
- Storms resulting in flash flooding that could wash out roads, initiate debris flows, and entrap people at flooded stream courses;
- Eroded and very rough roads that could result in unsafe driving conditions
- Blowing dust and ash on roads and hillsides.





Visitors to the Castle Fire area are advised to follow these outdoor safety best practices:

1. Know the weather forecast and check it frequently as conditions can change in a very short timeframe.
2. Let someone outside the area know exactly where you are and where you will be going daily.
3. Do not park vehicles or camp in areas with burned snags or where potential flood waters would prevent escape. Know where you are in relation to drainages.
4. During windy conditions remain in open areas that are free of trees (both live and burned) as much as possible.
5. If an area seems unsafe for any reason, leave.
6. Have good maps and know where you are at all times.
7. Keep a well charged cell phone with you and check it frequently so you know when you are in an area where there is no coverage.
8. Understand that there are many areas on public lands that are remote. It can take a very long time before responders can arrive if a rescue is required. The Castle Fire area is very remote.

Visitors can check with the North Kaibab Ranger District office to get the latest Information regarding current conditions:

North Kaibab Ranger District: 928-643-7395, www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab

Jacob Lake Visitor Center: 928-643-7298

For additional information please visit:

- Castle Fire Inciweb Page: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6439/>
- Kaibab National Forest Website: www.fs.usda.gov/kaibab
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/KaibabNF
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/KaibabNF
- Flickr: <http://bit.ly/CastleFire2019>

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