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**Fire danger in the Matanuska Valley continues; residents are asked
to help prevent and report new fires**

(Palmer, AK) – Six new fires started and spread into the wildlands on Thursday in the Matanuska Valley. The fire starts varied— a vehicle, a burn barrel, a burn pile, a power line, and two structure fires. The current conditions are such that, no matter what the source, it only takes a spark to start a wildland fire. Low to no snowpack combined with strong winds and low humidity have created the dangerous fire situation that warrants **extra caution** by residents. The 100-acre Palmer Fishhook Fire demonstrated the current fire potential in the Matanuska Valley as it spread quickly through dry grasses. The seven-acre Wilmington Fire that started with a debris burn is contained but staffed as firefighters remove and extinguish snags.

The Palmer Fishhook and other fires resulted in statewide wildland firefighter response to support the local efforts. Local efforts were provided by emergency responders, fire departments (including Palmer, Butte, Central, West Lakes, Anchorage, Chugiak), Mat-Su Borough Emergency Services, Police, and Troopers. The wildland fire mobilization continued into the late evening hours on Thursday. Division of Forestry (DOF) firefighters from offices in Fairbanks and Glennallen, and firefighters from BLM Alaska Fire Service in Fairbanks, gathered their gear and plugged in their engines, some in temperatures as low as -40F.

Residents are asked to use diligence in preventing fires. Call 911 to report new starts. Open burning, burning in burn barrels, and any other activity that involves fire or could create sparks is discouraged under the current and forecasted conditions. Motorists are asked to look out for wildland firefighters and other emergency responders that are responding to wildland fires. Please slow down and make sure headlights are on when passing firefighters on the road.

A Red Flag Warning (RFW) is in effect for the Matanuska Valley through 4:00 p.m. Saturday for strong wind and low humidity. Meteorologists in the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center expect the RFW to be

extended through Sunday. The RFW means that if a fire starts, conditions promote rapid fire growth that could pose a danger to the public and firefighters. Wind effects may include blowing objects, trees that are down, and travel difficulties. Information about the warnings is available on the National Weather Service webpage at <http://pafc.arh.noaa.gov/>. Residents may experience residual smoke; information is available at http://dec.alaska.gov/air/smoke_qa.htm.

For more information about the Palmer Fishhook Fire or other fires in the Matanuska-Susitna valleys, contact Norman McDonald, Fire Management Officer, Mat-Su Forestry, 907-761-6302. Additional information sources include: The City of Palmer Facebook page or 907-761-1301; Patty Sullivan, Public Affairs Director, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, 907-745-9577; Matanuska-Susitna School District <http://www.matsuk12.us>.

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