



Chelan County Sheriff's Office

Brian Burnett, Sheriff

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For Immediate Release

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<http://www.co.chelan.wa.us/sheriff>

Headed mushroom picking? Know the weather forecast and have an escape route in mind

ENTIAT – Chelan County emergency management officials are reminding mushroom hunters headed into areas burned by the Cougar Creek Fire to be vigilant about keeping up to date on weather forecasts and having a pre-planned escape route in the event of seasonal rain showers.

The Cougar Creek Fire was one of the largest wildfires in the state last year, burning more than 42,700 acres in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Entiat Ranger District is preparing for a busy mushroom season – and the hundreds of people it may attract.

The impact of rainfall over a recently burned area can be severe, warned Sgt. Kent Sisson of the Chelan County Department of Emergency Management. A burned surface may not absorb even light to normal rainfall, causing the precipitation to travel quickly, taking rocks, boulders, dirt and other debris with it and potentially overwhelming drainage systems, Sisson explained.

In fact, debris flows can move at up to 60 miles an hour on steep slopes, according to information from the National Weather Service.

“In Central Washington, we’re headed into thunderstorm season,” Sisson said. “While locals know there is no cell phone service in most of the Entiat Valley, visitors may not realize this. So we hope to help people understand that if a thunderstorm hits, or if it rains, there may be little warning of a debris flow event.”

Integrity ★ Teamwork ★ Excellence

Jason Mathews
Undersheriff



Jason Reinfeld
Chief of Special Operations



Rick Johnson
Chief of Patrol

Kim Oglesbee
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Chelan County shares the following tips with not only mushroom hunters but also other people recreating in burned areas:

- Watch for hazards in burns areas. Snags and damaged trees – blackened killed trees or green trees burned through at the bottom – can fall at any time. Or they can block trails or roads, including your exit if you should need to leave quickly during a rainstorm.
- Before you head out for the day, look at the weather forecast. If you are in an area that does not have cell phone service, consider purchasing or bringing along an NOAA weather radio to keep up on weather events.
- Have your escape plan in place prior to a weather event occurring. Maps are available for purchase at the Entiat Ranger District, 2108 Entiat Way. Be familiar with your surroundings.
- Move to higher ground in the case of a rain event. Do not drive across flooded roads or washes or wade through flooded areas. Rapidly flowing water can easily sweep you off your feet.
- Leave the area immediately in the case of a summer thunderstorm. If you see the tell-tale signs of a thunderstorm – rapidly rising cumulus clouds, a darkening sky, lightning in the distance and an increase in the wind – do not hesitate to get to a safe zone.
- Always tell someone where you are going when headed into the forest and when to expect you back. Search crews will not be able to reach you if they don't know you're in the forest.

Lastly, Sisson stresses that a little preparation can go a long way in having a successful mushroom harvest this year.

"Checking the weather and being aware of your surroundings are things we should all be doing when we go into the forest," Sisson said. "It is especially vital when recreating in these burned areas."

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