

# NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service

Santa Fe National Forest

For Immediate Release



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July 14, 2006

## **TUSAS FIRE CAUSED BY LIGHTNING**

(CUBA, NM)— Lightning was determined to be the cause of the Tusas Fire reported Santa Fe National Forest officials following a Law Enforcement investigation (standard procedure).

“This type of fire is what is referred to as a “sleeper”, said Dolores Maese, Public Affairs Officer, “Lightning can spark a fire that can remain undetected for days until conditions change, either enough moisture is received and it is completely snuffed-out or temperatures rise, humidity levels fall, causing a drying-out of conditions, awakening the “sleeper”.

The fire burned 19 acres of ponderosa pine yesterday, 3 miles southwest of Chaparral Girl Scout Camp on the Cuba Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest. Girl Scouts and staff were alerted about the fire and were prepared to take necessary measures to evacuate if the situation warranted. At approximately 6:30 pm lastnight, camp managers were advised that there was absolutely no threat to the camp and that the Girl Scouts could resume their normal activities.

Fire behavior was moderate due to several factors, mild winds, some remaining moisture in the ground cover and the fact that it reached an area that had been previously treated (thinned) as a measure to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire near the Girl Scout camp. “When the fire reached the thinned area, it lost its punch giving the firefighters the upper hand,” said Richard Montoya, Cuba District Fire Management Officer.

“Even though we’ve received some nice rainshowers, we all need to continue to be watchful and careful with campfires or anything that could start a wildfire,” added Ranger Steve Romero, “We can’t prevent lightning fires but when it comes to human-caused fires, that’s where we can make a difference.”

Human-caused fires are largely preventable. When planning your camping trip, consider going without a campfire. If you choose to have a campfire, use these campfire safety tips:

- Have a shovel and sufficient water available;
- Use an existing fire ring;
- Clear area of all vegetation;
- Keep your fire small;
- Never leave a campfire unattended;
- When you are ready to leave, make sure your fire is cold and dead out;
- Drown the fire with water making sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet.
- Stir in dirt and more water;
- Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again;
- You should be able to put the back of your hand in the fire ring and not feel any heat.

