



**UPPER COLORADO RIVER
INTERAGENCY FIRE MANAGEMENT**
NPS Colorado National Monument
BLM Grand Junction and Colorado River Valley
USFS White River, Grand Mesa and
Uncompahgre National Forests



http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/dispatch_centers/r2gjc/

Forest Service Closes Area Around Middle Elk Fire

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grand Junction, Colo. (9-27-2012, 10:00 a.m.) – Concern for public safety has prompted the Forest Service to close an area around the Middle Elk Fire on the Blanco Ranger District of the White River National Forest. According to District Ranger Ken Coffin, “While the fire has slowed with the recent rains and cooler temperatures, the risk of falling trees and snags weakened by the fire remains very real. A change in the weather could bring the fire back to life further increasing the risk to the public. For this reason we have closed the area around the fire to public access until further notice.” Maps and a full description of the Area Closure Special Order are available at offices of the White River National Forest and on the Forest’s web site at www.fs.fed.us/r2/whiteriver and on www.inciweb.org.

The Forest Service recognizes the impact this closure will have on hunters during the upcoming hunting season. In discussing the situation, Ranger Coffin said, “We know that this decision may be unpopular with some individual hunters who are planning to set up camps in the closed area. We are working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to make sure this information reaches as many people as possible before they arrive in the area so they can make alternative plans.”

Discovered on Thursday, September 20th, the Middle Elk Fire started from an unattended campfire. Since that time it has grown to 257 acres. Burning in a mix of spruce/fir, open areas and groves of aspen at high elevation west of the Buford/New Castle Road (Forest Road 245), the fire is not a threat to homes or other private property at present. Officials with the Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit (the UCR) have adopted a confine/contain fire suppression strategy for the fire. According to Josh Graham, Assistant Fire Management Officer for the Central Zone of the UCR, “Given the nature of the resources in the area of the fire and the risk to firefighter from falling trees and snags, we feel this is an appropriate strategy.” Resources currently assigned to the fire include an Incident Commander and one engine. If the fire becomes more active, additional resources will again be assigned to the fire and a more aggressive suppression strategy will be employed.

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