

Pot garden negligence caused several fires

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Fire investigators from the CalFire's Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit have determined that negligent use of equipment and improperly installed electrical systems on marijuana cultivation sites have caused several fires in the past few weeks.

The Mountain Ranch Road Fire started June 14 was contained to a large illegal debris pile, in preparation for marijuana cultivation. The responsible party was burning without a permit, during suspension. A citation was issued for violation of Public Resources Code 4423, burning without a permit. The cost for suppression is estimated to be \$7,204.

The Ranch Fire started June 22 burned one acre of vegetation and was caused by a power generator used to supply a marijuana operation located in dry grass. The generator did not have proper clearance around it. The cost to suppress the Ranch Fire is estimated to be \$23,733.

The Shetland Fire started July 11 burned two acres of vegetation and was caused by electrical arcing from a breaker box. This electrical feed supplied a marijuana operation. The cost for suppression for the Shetland Fire is estimated to be \$71,320.

The Appaloosa Fire started July 2 burned 310 acres of vegetation across multiple properties. Electrical wiring leading to a water source that supplied water to a marijuana grow caused the fire. The electrical wiring was not up to code. A citation was issued for violation of Health and Safety Code 13001, negligently causing a fire, and Public Resources Code Section 4422(b), allowing fire to spread to lands of another. Two firefighters were transported to the hospital for injuries sustained while fighting the fire. The cost for suppression on the Appaloosa Fire is estimated to be \$1,304,407.

"These fires posed a significant threat to our communities," said Josh White, unit chief of CalFire's Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit. "By educating people about the causes of these incidents, we hope to prevent any further fires. We have zero tolerance for negligently caused fire. We will seek criminal, civil and administrative actions against those who cause fires because of their irresponsible behavior."

Public Resources Code requires 10 feet of clearance, around any generator or other gas powered stationary equipment. A shovel and backpack pump water-type fire extinguisher must also be in the immediate area during operation. All electrical systems must be installed to code. Additionally, all debris burning is currently suspended.

If you have questions about how to be fire safe on your property, stop by any CalFire station. You can also call (209) 754-3831 to find your nearest station.