



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **Idaho Department of Lands completes Whitebird Fire investigation**

(Boise) – The Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) completed its investigation into the cause of the Whitebird Fire that started July 7 and burned more than 420 acres of grazing land and brush in the Idaho County town of White Bird.

Fire investigators determined a juvenile started the fire while igniting a mortar-style firework in very dry fuels.

Idaho law requires any person willfully or negligently igniting a fire on forest or range land in Idaho to be billed for the costs of suppressing the fire. (Idaho Code 38-107)

Lighting mortar shells and fireworks or throwing away lighted material such as cigarettes in forests or rangeland during the closed fire season constitutes negligent behavior (Idaho Code 38-117), so IDL sent a bill for the cost of suppressing the Whitebird Fire – amounting to \$84,500 – to the parent of the juvenile.

“People, not lightning, have started more than two-thirds of the fires on lands protected by the Idaho Department of Lands so far this year,” State Forester David Groeschl said. “Fire managers strongly encourage Idahoans of all ages to be careful not to start needless wildfires that threaten lives, property, and resources.”

Initial attack was carried out by IDL personnel with assistance from the U.S. Forest Service, Southern Idaho Timber Protective Association (SITPA), Salmon River Rural Fire Department, White Bird Fire Department, Idaho County Sheriff and the Idaho State Police. A 20-member hand crew and four engines were required to battle the blaze.

IDL fire investigations have resulted in a number of suppression bills sent to private individuals or businesses over the years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of suppression bills</u>
2013	10
2014	6
2015	4
2016	6

It often takes several years before full payment is received from a business or individual.

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