

Assuming the Hazards of Returning to an Active Fire Area

The McKinley Fire is still an active, burning fire that fire personnel are working on continuously day and night. During a wildfire fire and after it has burned through the landscape it continues to pose risks to firefighters and the public. There are ongoing hazardous situations and dangers that can be difficult to identify after the initial fire front. It is best to stay away from your home or business until fire officials tell you it is safe to return. Use caution and good judgment, ultimately you are responsible for your own safety and well-being. You are assuming a level of risk for returning before being advised to do so.

Following are some HAZARD and SAFETY concerns that need to be considered:

- **Fire Weakened Trees**

Trees native to the Mat-Su area like Spruce and Birch have shallow root systems that become compromised as the duff layer burns away. The tree may stay upright for days or weeks and then, without warning, fall over. This is a very real threat to people, animals and buildings.

- **Ash Pits**

When the duff layer and root systems burn, occasionally the ground surface remains undamaged and looks normal. Firefighters have been severely injured on the McKinley Fire, when they stepped onto the thin crust of surface dirt and fell through into the still-burning material underneath. This can happen to anyone and can result in severe burns.

- **Powerlines**

Assume ALL downed powerlines are charged and contact your local utility to have them shut off before working in the area. Falling trees can take down powerlines even when the fire has moved through.

• Equipment and Crews Working Nearby

Fire personnel are still focused on working an active fire in the area and utility crews continue working alongside the roadways, easements and on properties utilizing heavy equipment to safely restore services. Please drive safely and slowly in these areas, giving them the space to work. When driving past personnel and equipment, do so safely. For the safety of the fire personnel, utility crews, and your own, please stay clear of crews working to allow them to focus on their task. PLEASE also follow the restricted speed limit of posted 45mph.

Wandering into an active fire and areas that have burned adds risk to yourself and the fire personnel.

• Hazardous Materials and Toxic Fumes

Burning building materials release toxic gases and often, the air in a fire area contains contaminants. High temperatures during a fire can compromise hazardous material containers and the smoke within a fire area can be very dangerous, as well as exposed substances on the ground.

For questions, concerns or help contact

McKinley Fire Information:

907-313-9826

2019.McKinley@firenet.gov

<https://akfireinfo.com/>

[tps://www.facebook.com/AK.Forestry/](https://www.facebook.com/AK.Forestry/)

<https://www.facebook.com/BLMAFS/>



Matanuska Electric Association

mea.coop

907-761-9300

Review your evacuation plan and make sure all family members know it in case you need to leave your home for any reason.