



# MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## Legislative Fiscal Division

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**Legislative Fiscal Analyst**  
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DATE: September 11, 2009

TO: Members of the Legislative Finance Committee

FROM: Barbara Smith, Fiscal Analyst II

RE: 2009 Fire Season

As in previous years, the largest fires of the 2009 season began after the Labor Day holiday. Prior to the holiday the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) had expended approximately \$1.0 million in fire suppression costs. Due to the outbreak of the Indian Trail and the Eagle Mount fires, expenditures are anticipated to more than double. The Indian Trail fire is expected to cost the state \$1.0 million. Due to the location of this fire, it is not eligible for fiscal support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Eagle Mount fire threatened more than 100 structures and caused closure of I-90 for a period of time. This fire will cost an estimated \$500,000 and will receive assistance of approximately \$300,000 from FEMA. Given these additions, the current state fire costs are approximately \$2.2 million.

While the financial side of the fire season is far below average, the activity of the season was not. As of Wednesday, September 9, 2009, DNRC had flown 310 initial attack missions where 1938 acres burned, for an initial attack rate of 99 percent. In addition, DNRC provided mutual aid to 67 county managed events.