

July 15, 2020

To: Supervisor Carre Brown and the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

Cc: Clerk of the BOS, Hopland MAC, Hopland Volunteer Fire Department, Redwood Valley Calpella Volunteer Fire Department, Sheriff Matt Kendall, Christine Boyd, Steve (Gizmo) Henderson

Subject: Vehicle Fire Prevention

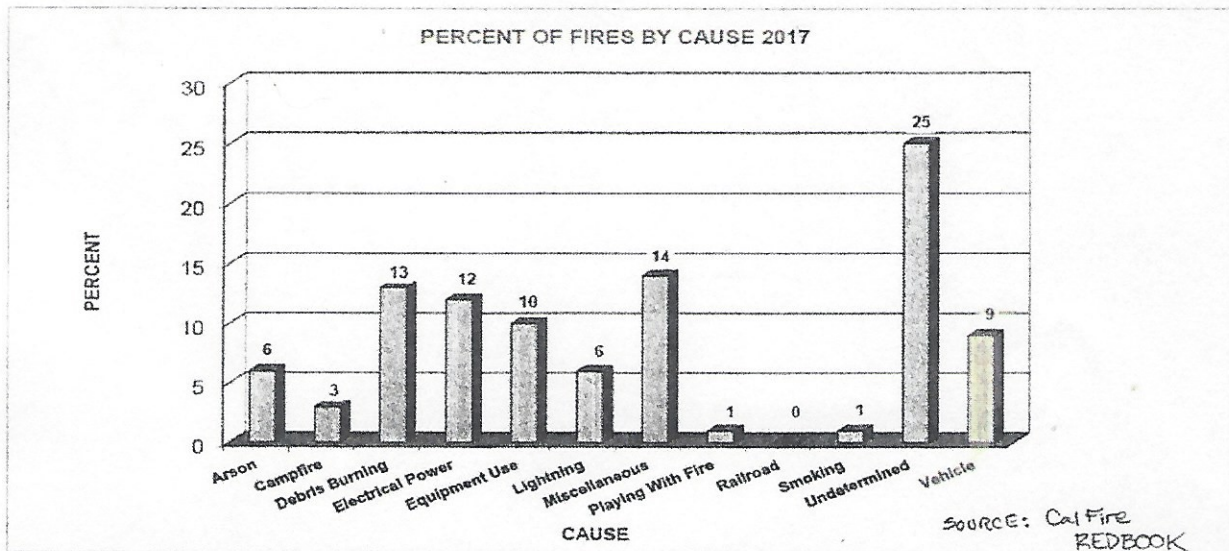
A suggestion has been brought to the Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council (RVMAC) regarding vehicle fire prevention which we think is worthy of consideration and action. It would increase drivers' awareness of the possibilities of sparking a wildfire from their vehicle or trailer. It is viable, low cost and just makes sense.

In 2017, 9% of all wildfires in California were started by vehicles. There were 14 vehicle caused fires alone in Mendocino County including the Grade Fire.

The devastating 2018 Carr Fire in Redding was caused by a flat tire on a trailer.

In May of this year there was a fire at Hwy 101/20 interchange probably caused by tow chains.

Vehicle sparked fires are among the leading causes of the state's wildfires.

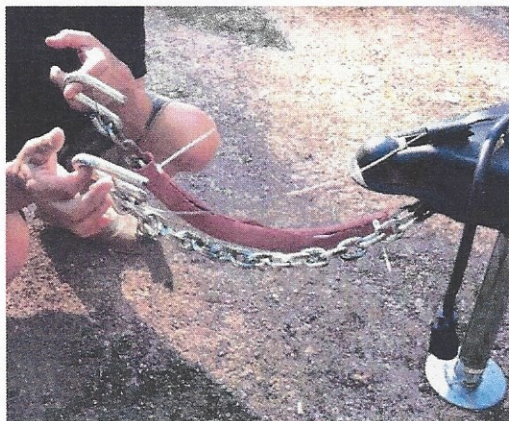


There are several factors that contribute to the creation of sparks from vehicles: safety chains or trailer jack foot hanging too low, tongue weight, low tire pressure and speed. Tongue weight can change almost unknowingly by adding weight to a trailer or even ice to an ice chest in the trunk or truck bed. Low tire pressure on the rear of the tow vehicle or the apparatus being towed lowers the safety chain and contributes to the excessive bounce in the tongue area. Speed adds gravity forces to the tongue when roadways transition from incline to flat such as bridges or railroad crossings.

The idea is at the very least to seasonally use the Continuous Messaging Signs, commonly referred to as the Amber Alert signs. Using the northbound Continuous Messaging Sign just south of Hopland would directly target vehicles coming from the high humidity Bay Area with fog during summer and fall, to the low humidity/high heat of Mendocino County. Suggested phrases that could be used are: *FLAT OR LOW TIRES START FIRES, DRIVE ON A FLAT TIRE, START A FIRE*, or simply *CHECK SAFETY CHAINS*.

In fact, in 2013, there was a multi-agency statewide campaign aimed at curbing human caused fires called *ONE LESS SPARK, ONE LESS WILDFIRE*. <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prevent-wildfire/one-less-spark-campaign/>

At the idea's full potential, there would be a pullout location in Hopland for drivers to inspect their vehicles. Local fire departments or businesses could sell repurposed fire hose segments to cover trailer chains.



Community partners might include the Hopland MAC, the Hopland Volunteer Fire Department and other interested community business partners.

The cost of implementing this proposal would only include the time it takes for CalFire or a local fire department to call or email the California Department of Transportation and request the message be shown on the CMS during the height of the fire season, or during high use times such as Memorial Day Weekend, opening day of hunting season, annual off-road events, fishing tournaments and concerts.

In conclusion, the hope is to save lives and property by raising public safety awareness. This idea is a simple one that requires no budget or personnel. A letter, email or phone call from the appropriate authority to the Department of Transportation is all that is required. It is hoped that as vehicle and trailer safety awareness increases, it will create a tsunami of citizen involvement and education. As a result of this new awareness, one local business owner has already decided to incorporate trailer safety checks as customers' vehicles leave his loading areas.

This advice is the voice of the RVMAC on a matter of concern for that community and not necessarily the opinion of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors.

Signed,

Dolly Riley, Chairperson

Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council