

SITUATION REPORT

JEFFERSON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

5/18/26

CONDITIONS SUMMARY

National Weather Service Outlooks/Advisories/Watches/Warnings

Current Hazard(s)	Area	Duration
None		

There are four weather hazard forecast categories:

- Outlook: Risk of weather hazard in the next 7 days. Could pose a threat to life/property.
- Advisory: Weather hazard is occurring, imminent or likely. Could cause significant inconvenience.
- Watch: Risk of weather hazard soon. Could pose a threat to life/property.
- Warning: Weather Hazard is occurring, imminent or likely. Poses a threat to life/property.

6-10 Day Climate Outlook from the National Weather Service

Temperature	Above normal predicted
Precipitation	Below normal predicted

Weekly weather hazard key points from the National Weather Service

Cool temperatures and a chance for thunderstorms are forecast through Tuesday, with a midweek weather system projected to bring low elevation rain and mountain snow. Windy conditions are expected next weekend.

Drought Status from NOAA

Area	Current Drought Condition	Previous Report Drought Condition
North JeffCo.	D0	D0
South JeffCo.	D1	D1
West JeffCo.	D1	D1

The six drought conditions are: None; D0: Abnormally Dry; D1: Moderate; D2: Severe; D3: Extreme; D4: Exceptional.

Air Quality from Montana DEQ

Location	Current Condition	Previous Report
Helena	Good	Good
Boulder*	Good	Good
Whitehall*	Good	Good
Butte	Good	Good

The six air quality conditions and descriptions are:

Good: Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.

Moderate: Air quality is acceptable, however there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.

Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (SG): Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The public is less likely to be affected.

Unhealthy: Some members of the public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.

Very Unhealthy: Health alert: the risk of health effects is increased for everyone.

Hazardous: Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected

*= The Boulder and Whitehall stations are smaller non-regulatory sensors for situational awareness use only.

Fire Restrictions

Current Status	Interagency campfire & forest activity restrictions. Applicable to recreational fires under 48" in diameter.
X	No restrictions on campfires or forest activities
	Stage 1 Restrictions: Campfires limited to improved rings < 3 feet; smoking limited to areas cleared of vegetation.
	Stage 2 Restrictions: Stage 1 restrictions plus total campfire ban, 1pm-1am forest activity limits with patrol requirement.
	Area closures: None
Current Status	County debris burning (slash pile burning) restrictions. Applicable to ALL fires over 48" in diameter. BBQ pits and burn barrels are considered open fires on DNRC Forest Classified lands and therefore require a burning permit in those locations even if under 48" in size. (36.10.132(10), ARM)
X	No debris burning restrictions county-wide. County burn permit & permit activation required.
	Some fire districts/fire service areas with debris burning closures:
	Debris burning closed county-wide.
Current Period	Montana DEQ air quality burn restriction period.
X	Spring/Summer burning period (March 1 – August 31): County burn permit & permit activation required.
	Fall burning period (Sept.1 – Nov 30): County burn permit & permit activation required. The burner also must check DEQ ventilation hotline (800-225-6779 or www.burnclosures.mt.gov) for current air quality conditions.
	Winter burning period (Dec 1 – Feb 28): DEQ application & approval required for burning*. County burn permit & county permit activation is still required in addition to DEQ permit. Call MT DEQ at 406-444-3490

Fire Restrictions Narrative Summary

NOTE: Debris Burning will close for the season on July 1st, 2026.

Fire Danger Indices

HIDC Data Point Summaries*	Current	Current Percentile	Current Adj. Rating	Previous Report	Pvs Report Percentile	Pvs Report Adj. Rating
PSA NR11 ERC	39.3	< 80 th	Low	23.73	< 80 th	Low
PSA NR09 ERC	43.29	< 90 th	Low	20.89	< 80 th	Low

*HIDC (Helena Interagency Dispatch Center) FDRA (Fire Danger Rating Area) ERC. The Helena Ranger District of the USFS and the Helena Unit of the DNRC Central Land Office utilize these data points for fire danger analysis. FDRA #1 RAWs sites include Elkhorn (243303) and Helena (241907), and FDRA #2 RAWs sites include Gleason (241802), Benchmark (241901), and S. Fork Judith (242102).

Definitions:

- ERC: Energy Release Component. The available BTUs per square foot within the flaming front at the head of a fire.

NRCG Preparedness Levels (PL)

Geographic Area	PL	Previous Report PL
Northern Rockies	1	1
National	2	2

Preparedness Level general descriptions:

- Fire personnel can suppress wildfires without requesting additional resources from other areas. Fire activity is at or below normal.
- Fire personnel can manage fire activity without requesting many resources from other areas. Fire activity is increasing.
- Fire personnel require some significant resources from other areas. Large incidents are burning for more than two operational periods.
- Fire personnel are starting to compete for resources from other incidents. Large, complex fire activity is increasing.
- Fire resource needs are not being met with significant competition from other incidents. New incident Initial Attack capability is compromised due to large fire activity. At any point along the scale, the index number indicates the amount of net rainfall that is required to reduce the index to zero, or saturation.

NRCS Snow Water Equivalencies

Location	Current	Previous Report
	% of median	% of median
Helena Valley (N. of Boulder Hill) SNOTEL site #'s: 360, 487, 903, 893	47	63
Jefferson River Basin (S. of Boulder Hill) SNOTEL site #'s: 487, 722	66	71

Snow water equivalent is the depth of water that would result from the melting of the snowpack.

NRCS Precipitation Accumulation Water Year-to-Date (October 1- September 30)

Location	Current	Previous Report
	% of median	% of median
Helena Valley (N. of Boulder Hill) SNOTEL site #'s: 360, 487, 903, 893	113	120
Jefferson River Basin (S. of Boulder Hill) SNOTEL site #'s: 487, 722	116	129

USGS Streamflow in Cubic Feet per Second (CFS)

Stream/Location	Latest Observed CFS	Previous Report CFS	Historical data for today's date		
			Mean	High	Low
Prickly Pear Creek – Clancy	37	39	113	278	21
Boulder River – Boulder	202	220	550	1680	82
Jefferson – Three Forks	2560	1230	3757	11,100	603
Jefferson – Twin Bridges	2800	1270	3798	9530	713

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Burn Permit Data

Data Point	Current YTD	Previous Report YTD	2025 Total
Total Permit Sales	464	436	691
Total Activations	910	848	1652
May Activations	110	48	252

Countywide Calls for Service (CFS)

Type	Last Week	Previous Report	YTD	2025
Wildfires	1	0	22	75
Structure Fires	2	1	6	30
Other Fire Calls*	3	2	99	315
Motor Vehicle Accidents (Injury and Non-Injury)	13	7	182	635
EMS BLS Calls	12	10	215	568
EMS ALS Calls	9	5	97	240
Year-to-Date Total Calls for Service Includes all the above plus law enforcement CFS.	4809	4288		13,641

*Other Fire Calls include Arson, Aircraft Incidents, Downed Wires, Electrical Hazards, Explosions, Fire Alarms, Fire Restriction Violations, Fireworks, Gas Leaks, HAZMAT, Smoke Reports, and Vehicle Fires.

Statewide Montana Wildfire Data

Current Report		Previous Report		2025 Total Quantity	2025 Total Acreage
2026 YTD Quantity	2026 YTD Acreage	2025 YTD Quantity	2025 YTD Acreage		
311	16,857	222	14,180	2423	75,651

