**Forest Fires in Hungary**

Forest fires multiplied in the last few decades in Hungary. The reasons can be found in climate extremities, less precipitation, the increase of mean annual temperature and a series of winters without snowfall.

Not only the frequency but the intensity and the speed of forest fires heightened heavily in extremely hot summers in the latest years. High fire intensity has adverse effects on the whole vegetation, its structure and the forest site as well. Contrary to low intensity fires, the vegetation is not always capable to short term regeneration after intensive fires, and the secondary effects (erosion, deflation) may result in the degradation of the site.

Surface fires, when surface litter and other dead vegetal parts and smaller shrub burn have been common in Hungarian forests. As a result of changing natural and weather conditions surface fires develop to canopy fires more and more frequently. Canopy fires mostly develop in coniferous forests, mainly in the Great Hungarian Plain. Ground fire is not significant in Hungary, though – due to partial, relatively thick peat – it is not unknown either.

“Traditional” grassland use includes burning methods in early spring, which can accidentally spread to nearby forest. These fires usually burn between February and April, after snow-break.

Forest litter, needles, dead twigs and branches get totally dry in arid summer periods (June- August) without rainfall and start easily burning as a consequence of negligently lighted fire. Coniferous forests are highly endangered, as a small litter layer fire can even result in canopy fire in this period. Summer fires usually burn in the Great Hungarian Plain.

Forest fire hazard strongly depends on weather. In extreme weather conditions the forest authority prohibits fire or visitation at specified forest plots. When a fire ban is in place, the lighting of any open is forbidden, including camp fires within 200 metres of any forest land.

The role of the selected target audiences in human caused forest fires

The farmers and farm stead owners usually induce fires in the frames of their agricultural activities by controlled burnings and wasteland burnings which are lighted negligently, irregularly or without the needed permission. Most rarely wildfires are caused by improperly used agricultural equipment.

The hikers usually cause fires by campfires which are not properly extinguished or which were lightened at an improper place. An other common cause of fires is burning cigarette thrown away by hikers, but it is also possible to induce fire by a car parking on high grass.

A case study has revealed that the extremely high number of fires arose near highways and railways had been caused mostly by burning cigarettes, and secondly by the brakes of freight trains.

Children (age of 5 or 6 years) might cause fires negligently by throwing burning matches or unattended and not extinguished small camp fires.

The relevant information on fire prevention might be easily transmitted to adult audience through the children. (Hey, Daddy, do not throw away your burning cigarette!)