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## California's disaster a warning sign for residents of Mount Charleston

By BRIAN HAYNES  
REVIEW-JOURNAL

When Mount Charleston resident Marty Glenn watches the walls of fire burning through Southern California, his mind turns to the dry brush and dead trees sitting throughout the mountain enclave.

"It's not a matter of if the mountain is going to catch on fire, it's when," said Glenn, a nine-year Mount Charleston resident and member of the Nevada Fire Safe Council. "This place is a tinderbox."

Two straight years of below-average rainfall in Southern Nevada have dried out plants and other vegetation on the mountain northwest of Las Vegas.

Firefighters encountered several small wildfires on the mountain this year, but aggressive fire crews and cooperative weather prevented them from getting out of hand, said Mark Blankensop of the Nevada Division of Forestry.

"We were lucky," he said.

Fire danger on Mount Charleston was moderate as summer turned to fall and temperatures dropped.

A wet winter would help ease the dry conditions but could increase the fire danger because the new plants could add fuel for a wildfire.

"It's a double-edged sword," said Jeff Underwood, the state climatologist.

Nevada's traditionally dry weather means every year has the potential for large wildfires, he said.

"No matter how our winter looks, our fire season is going to be dangerous," Underwood said.

Many of the state's wildfires are sparked by lightning. Underwood is studying lightning patterns in Nevada to try to predict bad fire seasons.

On Mount Charleston, the Nevada Fire Safe Council helps residents clear brush away from their homes.


Glenn said the U.S. Forest Service received a grant several years ago to remove dead trees in the forest, but the project has been held up by environmental studies.

"They have good intentions, but it seems they're caught up in government red tape," Glenn said.

A Forest Service spokesman did not return a call for comment.

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