

All-out Fire Fight

An all-out effort to stop any additional man-caused fires in Interior Alaska is scheduled for the July 4 weekend by several state and federal agencies.

Gov. Keith H. Miller has declared a state of emergency for Interior Alaska where the majority of the state's 50 current fires are now located. More than 600,000 acres have been burned by 316 fires and there are more than two months of the fire season remaining.

During the holiday weekend, road checks, road closures and restricted travel will be utilized with special patrolmen to eliminate any chance of new man-caused fires being started.

The June 18 order prohibiting open fires within a 100,000 square-mile area of Interior and Southcentral Alaska will be strictly enforced and violators will receive citations, said F.J. Keenan, director of the Alaska Division of Lands.

There are 14 forestry "patrolmen"—six from the state Division of Lands and eight from the federal Bureau of Land Management—scheduled to patrol highway and river systems in the Northcentral district of Interior Alaska. They will watch for new fires and will enforce the June 18 order prohibiting open burning.

Because of dense smoke conditions, the patrols will be by auto. The Chena, Salcha and Clearwater-Goodpaster systems will be patrolled by means of river boats.

The highway systems to be patrolled are the Alaska Highway from the Alaska-Yukon Territory border to its junction with the Richardson Highway at Delta Junction; the Richardson Highway from Glennallen to Fairbanks; the Glenn Highway from Gulkana to Tok; the Fairbanks to Mt. McKinley Highway

its entire length, and the entire length of the Steese, Taylor and Elliott highways.

Two highway sections will be closed to tourist travel and will be restricted to resident travel only. These are the Elliott Highway from Livengood to Manley and the Taylor Highway segment from the junction to Eagle.

Manned checkpoints will be located on the Fairbanks-McKinley Highway near the Nenana River; the Steese Highway near Fox; the Chena Hot Springs Road near the pavement end, and the Taylor Highway at Tetlin Junction.

A warning sign has been erected at the Alaska-Yukon border advising incoming travelers of the extreme fire danger and advising them of the prohibition against open burning. The state travel center at Tok is distributing copies of the no-burning order.

The Division of Lands, BLM, State Troopers, National Guard, Fish and Game and military are cooperating in the effort. An investigator from the State Troopers has been assigned to work with BLM officials in determining the cause of suspicious fires.

A briefing session was conducted at the Fairbanks District office of the BLM on Wednesday at 9:30 a.m. for those who will take part in special patrol activity during the holiday period.