



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14, 2000

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Inmate Crew Continues Work to Help Reduce Forest Fire Risk

(Pierre) - Fifty state prison inmates remain in the Southern Black Hills to help reduce the risk of another major forest fire.

The inmate crew is continuing to clear fire trails and other areas near Hot Springs and Custer that were clogged by broken and downed trees during an April blizzard. The damaged trees will be put into slash piles for chipping into compost or burned as conditions allow.

All of the inmates and the correctional officers supervising the inmates are fire-trained and certified. Crews have fire protection gear and fire-fighting equipment with them so they are prepared to help respond to any fire.

"This crew is made up of inmates who helped fight the recent Jasper fire," said Corrections Secretary Jeff Bloomberg. "Several also helped fight the Flag Mountain fire so they're well prepared to assist area fire departments with anything that may arise."

The Veterans Administration Hospital in Hot Springs is housing the inmate crew temporarily.

Once the cleanup work is completed, most of the inmates will move to the Custer Trusty Unit for the winter to work on projects at Custer State Park, the Mickelson Trail and the Veterans Home in Hot Springs.