

Smokey Bear Quick Facts

- Dressed in a ranger's hat, belted blue jeans, and carrying a shovel, he has been the recognized wildfire prevention symbol since 1944.
- One spring day in 1950 in the Capitan Mountains of New Mexico, a little cub had been caught in the path of the fire. He had taken refuge in a tree that was now nothing but a charred, smoking snag. His climb had saved his life but left him badly burned on the paws and hind legs. The firefighters removed the little bear cub from the burned tree and a rancher, who had been helping the firefighters, agreed to take the cub home. The cub needed veterinary aid and was flown to Santa Fe where the burns were treated and bandaged.
- The firefighters who rescued the little bear cub call him Hot Foot Teddy but his name quickly was changed to Smokey Bear.
- The living symbol of Smokey Bear was an American black bear cub
- After he recovered from his burns the go-ahead was given to send the bear cub to Washington, D.C. Once there, he found a home at the National Zoo and became the living symbol of Smokey Bear.
- Smokey Bear became very popular. In 1952, Steve Nelson and Jack Rollins wrote the anthem that would cause a debate among Smokey enthusiasts for the next several decades. In order to maintain the correct rhythm, the writers added a "the" between "Smokey" and "Bear." **As testament to the song's popularity, Smokey Bear became known as "Smokey The Bear" to many adoring fans, but in actuality his name never changed, and he is still known correctly as Smokey Bear, NOT Smokey "the" Bear. Just like it's not Easter "the" Bunny or Santa "the" Clause**
- 1965, the volume of mail so high that Smokey Bear received his own Zip Code – 20252. The President of the US is the only other "person" to have a private zip code. The President's private zip code is unique, no other person or location uses that zip code and the zip code changes with each new President's administration.
- Smokey died in 1976 and was returned to Capitan, New Mexico, where he is buried in the State Historical Park
- "Only YOU Can Prevent Forest Fires" was first used as a slogan in 1947.

- Smokey's message of "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" was changed to "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires" in 2001. The term wildfire applies to any uncontrolled, unplanned, unwanted outdoor fire (such as grass fires, range fires, brush fires). The change in tagline was in response to an outbreak of fires in natural areas other than forests, and in an effort to make Smokey's message of forest conservation more contemporary.
- The first Smokey Bear costume was fabricated in 1951. Virginia and Wisconsin have a running debate over who had the first. Wisconsin did have a costume ...but it was made from an actual bear hide. Virginia's was designed by the State Forester and professionally created by a tailor.
- Legislation was passed in 1952, PL 82-359, to take Smokey out of public domain and place him under the control of the Secretary of Agriculture. An amendment to that Act, PL 93- 318, passed in 1974, enabled commercial licensing and directed that fees and royalties be used to promote forest fire prevention. Hundreds of items have been licensed under this authority over the years.
- In 1984, Smokey was honored with his own postage stamp.
- Bambi was actually the first face of the forest fire prevention message in 1942, Walt Disney agreed to use Bambi for 1 year..
- Smokey's message has always been about personal responsibility – remember his ABC's: **Always Be Careful** with fire. If you start a fire, put it out when you are done. **"Remember, Only YOU Can Prevent Wildfires!"**
- Smokey is administered by three entities: the **United States Forest Service**, the **National Association of State Foresters**, and the **Ad Council**. Smokey Bear's name and image are protected by U.S. federal law, the *Smokey Bear Act of 1952* (16 U.S.C. 580 (p-2); 18 U.S.C. 711).
- Smokey does not wear boots.... He has Bear Feet!