

# Fire in the Forest

One of the healthiest things that can happen to a ponderosa forest is to have a forest fire every five to 20 years. Without a regular fire, two things happen that can ultimately lead to a destruction that lasts for hundreds of years.

First, "a healthy ponderosa forest is made of widely spaced, fire-resistant trees," writes Michael Parfit in *National Geographic*. "With over-protection, young trees and competing species make a flammable under story so shaded that ponderosa seedlings can't grow." Thus, new ponderosa stop springing up.

Second, dead wood, needles and cones pile up in a thicker and thicker layer of combustible kindling on the forest floor. When a fire eventually does come to an over-protected forest, as it eventually must, the fire burns hotter and deeper. Instead of a healthy fire that burns quick and low over the floor of the forest, blackening the trunks of healthy trees but nothing more, the fire explodes in the crown of the trees. It also destroys the roots. The result is total destruction of every tree.

Such a fire ruins the forest ecosystem. The soil no longer absorbs rain, and it erodes.

As odd as it may seem, ponderosa forests need fire in order to be healthy and viable.

Christians also benefit from fiery trials, even though they are painful. They can burn away the temporal, worthless things that so easily pile up in our lives.

We can discover the truth of this principle as we talk with our residents in Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home. They have walked through the fire time and again in their lives, and they can quickly tell you what is valuable, and what isn't.

--Beecher Hunter