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# DENR issues advisory on forest fires this summer

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**T**he Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has issued a fire safety advisory for natural parks and forest areas across the country in time for the summer season.

Although summer has not officially started, DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said it was better to prepare for devastating forest fires that are prevalent during the dry season due to hot temperatures.

He has ordered all regional offices of the DENR and the Forest Management Bureau (FMB) to make sure that their fire-fighting assets are in good working condition and are ready in the event of a forest fire outbreak.

"This is to prevent and minimize fire incidents given the increased risk of forest fires during the summer months," he said.

Cimatu also ordered forestry field

officials to beef up patrols in forest areas and ensure the cooperation of upland communities on forest fire prevention.

"Community support is the backbone of our forest fire prevention efforts. The support of people living in upland communities, along with increased surveillance by our patrol groups, will enable faster detection and response, which is critical in minimizing fire damage," Cimatu said.

The FMB has provided each regional office of the DENR with several sets of 12-piece firefighting tools: fire swatter, fire shovel, scrape shovel, collapsible fire pump, safety helmet, working glove, brush mask, goole, rake hoes, pick-shovels, axe and fuel-powered grass cutter.

Apart from this, the DENR also makes use of digital technology to fight forest fire through the LAWIN Forest and Biodiversity Protection System, or simply LAWIN system.

Under this system, fire-prone forest areas are mapped and profiled according to their location, resources available and communities that can be tapped.

Launched in 2016, LAWIN system is meant to improve the response mechanisms to address observed threats in forest areas with active support from local communities in the monitoring and enforcement of wildlife laws, especially in areas that are considered hotspots for forest fires, including timber and wildlife poaching.

Part of its surveillance activities is to seek out for "triggers" for forest fires, including fuel wood gathering, kaingin-making, charcoal-making, honey collection, camping/recreation, pasture preparation, and even hunting.

Last year, some 5,322 LAWIN patrolers covered some 6.4 million hectares of forest lands in their surveillance activities, covering a distance of some 121,299 kilometers.

\* ENVIRONMENT

\* DENR

\* FMB - FOREST MANAGEMENT BUREAU