

Thinking Fire Safety in Your Woodlands

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With the receipt of this issue of *Forest-Tree Leader*, we find ourselves heading into another summer dry season in the woods. As weather and ground conditions improve, woodland owners with all that pent up energy find themselves ready to go to work. The question is: are we fire safe ready? The intent of this article is to provide the newcomers, and refresh the memories of us old-timers, with some specific tool and equipment needs and additional basic guidelines for practices when working in the woodlands. Our thanks to Ken Cushman, Unit Forester, Oregon Department of Forestry for his input.

Keep in mind, that this information is for use when conducting general forest maintenance and pre-commercial thinning practices outside of fire season and during Fire Protection level I fire danger status. **For higher levels of fire danger and larger operations, please contact the Oregon Department of Forestry and/or your local fire department.**

FIRST, SOME GENERAL ISSUES:

- Have means of communications in case of emergencies; fire, medical, etc.
- A user friendly First Aid Kit is readily available.
- A Notification of Operations Permit from the Oregon Department of Forestry has been acquired.
- If burning of slash (all forest maintenance debris) is part of the operation, be sure and have a burning permit from the local fire district or ODF. Follow guidelines set forth with the issued permit.

GENERAL TOOLS REQUIRED:

The minimum numbers of basic hand tools required, **inside ODF boundaries**, is for a crew of four (4) people. These basic tools should be on hand for all woodland operations, but for those outside ODF boundaries,

check with your local fire department

- 1 Axe or Pulaski.
- 2 Shovels. Shovels should have a minimum face width of 8" and a handle of at least 26".
- 1 Grub Hoe or Hazel Hoe; a second Pulaski would be ok if you have an axe also.
- 1 Tool Box, clearly marked with lid and latch. This equipment may be waived, by inspectors, if you have the tools well marked and located in a single area that is easily accessible. I have my tool faces and handle tips painted in safety yellow and bundled together with bungee cords. Some operators have their tools in racks stationed at the work site.
- Fire tools are to be used for fire fighting purposes only; **bring extra shovels and axes for work.**

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:

- Each piece of operating equipment with an internal combustion engine must have a 2.5 lb. ABC fire extinguisher mounted and accessible, on board.
- For each chain saw, a 8 oz. or larger extinguisher is required to be within reach of the operator at all times.

WATER RESOURCES

While not required for maintenance or pre-commercial thinning operations, on a limited basis, it is a good practice to have water on site and readily accessible.

- 5-gallon back-pack sprayer.

- 5 gallons of additional water. I have a plastic bucket with removable lid and pour opening. The sealed lid is available at some sporting goods stores and most hardware outlets for around \$10.

GENERAL OPERATION REQUIREMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

- Make sure that all spark arresters are in good working order.
- Make sure that spark screens on chain saws are in good working order and not damaged.
- Make it a point to set hot chain saws on firm footing of bare earth or a fire resistant shield. Keep it away from forest duff and other flammable debris.
- Clean away excess flammable material from all power driven machinery.
- Keep spare fuel at least 20 feet away from work site. I know it's a pain, but should a fire start you don't want a gallon or two of flammable liquid in the way.
- If burning, clear away excess flammable debris, bare earth would be nice, and keep you piles small.
- Upon completion of the day's work, after picking up tools, check the area where saws and other combustion-fired equipment were in use. Check for flame, smoke or hot spots.

For more in-depth information on tools, operational practices and fire danger levels, obtain IFPL Self-Inspection Form 5/02 and/or pamphlet 1-1-1-510, on legal requirements and practices from the ODF. ■