

Fire Preparedness Special Investigation

Summary of Good Practices

February 2011

Suggestions for being diligent about fire preparedness:

General

Consider developing standard operating procedures and checklists. These clearly communicate a licensee's expectations around fire preparedness, and provide a record of inspections. Regular on-site monitoring further helps to demonstrate that a licensee has taken reasonable steps to ensure that its contractors or crews are taking reasonable steps to prevent fires.

Contact details

Provide 24-hour contact information to the fire centre before March 31 each year. Information about active operating areas and what equipment is on site is also useful to the fire centre.

Sufficient fire tools

Attach hand tools directly to machines and equip pick-ups with a shovel, Pulaski and a full and functional hand tank pump to ensure that there will always be enough tools for each worker even if individual tools are lost or broken.

Selecting a representative weather station

When determining whether or not a weather station is representative of a work site, consider slope, aspect, elevation (is the station at a similar or lower elevation than the work site), date of snow melt, distance from the weather station and topographical considerations (e.g., is the work site sheltered or subject to high winds?). The wildfire guidelines committee further suggests considering stand conditions, forest health, fuel type and fuel loading. If accessible, also consider the weather station maps previously available from the government. Selecting a number of nearby weather stations and averaging the danger classes is not recommended.

Document the reasons for selecting the representative weather station.



FIGURE 13. Fire extinguishers mounted on an excavator.

Operating in accordance with danger class restrictions

Operating according to the danger class restrictions is the law, but it should be viewed as a minimum requirement. Consider modifying activities as the danger class increases, for example:

- move to early shift before it is legally required;
- avoid tracked or chained equipment on rocky ground in high and extreme danger class; and
- avoid conducting high-risk activities when only one worker is present, when the danger class is very high or extreme.

Adequate suppression system

Before work begins, consider the size and topography of the work site to ensure that the suppression system can provide water to any part of the block should hand tools and fire extinguishers become ineffective. Identify on-site water sources and make sure everyone knows where they are.

Conduct a pre-work meeting to check fire preparedness, with weekly checks afterwards. Test equipment, including starting up the pump(s) and ensuring that parts are compatible and in good repair. Hold regular fire-suppression drills to test response time. Document these activities.

Consider having more than one water source on site, placed so as to be near different activities. Move the water around the site to keep it closest to the highest-risk activity.

Maintaining a fire watch

A fire watch must actively patrol the work site and be able to see the area where work took place. Performing other duties, such as maintaining a machine or processing wood while on fire watch does not satisfy the legal requirements for a fire watch. Ensure that the fire watch has the ability to call for help.

Document the fire watch start and finish times, areas patrolled, and the weather conditions.

Engines

Ensure all equipment has a spark arrestor, that the exhaust system and muffler are in good repair and that the machine is operating within manufacturer's specifications. Clean machines daily to remove needles, branches and other debris so as to reduce the risk of a fire.