



THE HOT SHEET

FIRE SEASON SNEAKING UP

From State Meteorologist Jim Little

The tremendously wet May actually caused Oregon to reach average snowpack conditions for this date. The abundant precipitation in May didn't add to the snowpack, but the accompanying, cooler-than-average weather retarded snow melt. Typically the snowpack peaks in depth in April, then begins to recede fairly rapidly as the weather warms. This year, the curve has been rather flat. So, even though we started with less snowpack, it has held on longer.

It is a tough call as to what kind of a wildfire season Oregon will experience - average, mild or active. As our veteran fire dawgs are fond of saying, "We're never more than two weeks away from a bad fire season." Their point is that whether the spring is dry or wet, once we enter the warm period of the year, the day-to-day conditions will largely determine fire activity.

The moral of the story: now is not the time to be complacent. Heading into fire season, treat it as though we were in the heat of the summer. Be diligent in your fire prevention program on the ground and make sure that all of your fire suppression equipment is available and in working order.



New Generation Fire Shelters Now Required

On January 1, 2010 the industry standard for fire shelters changed from the older style fire shelters (yellow) to the "New Generation" fire shelters (blue). A memorandum to that effect was signed by the five federal wildland fire agencies and NASF agreeing that all wildland firefighters, including cooperators and contractors only use the "New Generation" shelters from that date forward.

The current Fire Shelter Directive is still valid and has not changed as to when fire shelters are required. What has changed is that the New Generation fire shelter is the Agency's standard for all ODF and Association employees, including those people that are under ODF's hire or direction. There are no exceptions to that standard.

The differences between the fire shelters are very significant with the "New Generation" shelter being much safer.

TRAINING REMINDER

Are you up to date on your OR-OSHA Basic Fire Suppression Credentials?

TOOL TABLE



#. of people in operation	1-4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
# Tool Boxes Required	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
# Axes or Pulaskis	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
# Shovels	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	7	7	7	7	7
# Hazel Hoes or Pulaskis	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	7	8	8	9	10

IFPL REFRESHER

The Industrial Fire Precaution Level system is designed to prevent wildfires associated with operations in forestland areas. Each level signifies an increase in fire danger that a specific area is facing. Decisions to increase or decrease the IFPL are based in part on scientific data processed from the field. This information is gathered and distributed through the National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS).

Level I calls for each operation to have the minimum fire tool and water requirements. A firewatch service must also be in place. Oregon law requires a minimum of three hours firewatch, but may be waived to fewer hours according to individual districts. Douglas and Coos requires a one hour fire watch under IFPL I.

Level II calls for time restrictions on cable yarding, blasting, welding or cutting of metal and power saws (except at loading sites). Operators may only perform these tasks before 1:00 p.m. and after 8:00 p.m. local time. A fire watch of two hours is required in the Douglas District and three hours in the Coos District.

Level III prohibits motorized cable yarding entirely. Power saw use is also prohibited (except at loading sites and tractor skidder operations before 1:00 p.m. and after 8:00 p.m.). The following can operate before 1:00 p.m. and after 8:00 p.m.: tractor/skidder operations; mechanized loading or hauling of any product or material; blasting; welding or cutting of metal; any other spark emitting operation not specifically mentioned. Firewatch of three hours is required on all lands under DFPA and CFPA protection.

Level IV is a complete general shutdown. All operations must cease in wildland areas.

To stay current on IFPL restrictions, call the closure information line (DFPA: 541-672-0379, CFPA: 541-267-1789) or visit the appropriate web site.

CLARIFYING LIABILITY

Fires which result from negligent activities, including activities where a landowner or the operator did not comply with a fire prevention requirement, subjects both parties to paying the total cost of fire suppression incurred by the forester. There is no upper limit or cap on this liability; whether the fire costs \$100 or \$1,000,000 to suppress.

Fires that do not result from negligent acts, those that are true accidents, subject both the landowner and the operator to paying up to a maximum of \$300,000 of the suppression costs. The same is true for a fire that burns in an operation area, but the cause of the fire cannot be determined for certain. Unless proof exists otherwise, the law requires the presumption that the fire resulted from the operation activity and the landowner and the operator are equally liable for paying up to the first \$300,000 of suppression costs.

RECHECK SLASH PILES

Fires resulting from “holdover” slash piles continue to plague many districts, causing unnecessary costs and resource damage. Avoid creating “dirty” piles (slash mixed with soil in the pile). Expect burned slash piles to hold fire for several months. Check piles frequently throughout the fire season following burning.



Three excellent tools are available to check piles – your nose, hands and shovel. Active combustion gives a unique odor recognizable by anyone who works in the woods. The back of a human hand is an excellent sensor for checking for heat. The shovel is the probe to prospect for buried embers that could surface in the future. Recent experience has proved that diligent use of these three tools could prevent many damaging fires throughout the state.