

Safe Work Procedure – Pile Burning

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT:

Sturdy appropriate footwear including boot equipped with good soles (Vibram) or caulks if walking woody debris
High visibility clothing and clothing that is fire resistant (e.g. cotton or wool, not polyesters) or commercially treated (e.g. Nomex)

Hardhat of a contrasting color

Fire resistant gloves that are suitable for the type of light up fuel being used, and chemical resistant gloves for fuel.

PROCEDURES:

Pile Construction, Curing and Seasoning

a) Pile as high as possible while maintaining safety for the machine operator and stability of the pile for subsequent ground crews; and fuel should be continuous / compact with mix of sizes. Piles can be either Category 2 open fire or Category 3 open fire (3 or more piles, or greater than 2 m in height or 3 m in width), depending on the number and size of the piles as per Wildfire Regulations.

(b) Place material into a haystack or bell shape to shed water and to increase the chimney / venting effect with height

(c) Create a mixture of fuel sizes / types. Fine fuels (branches, needles and leaves) should be mixed with short chunks and non- merchantable stems;

(d) Avoid large stumps and root wads. These should be excluded from piles and dispersed back into the setting where possible;

(e) Avoid piling soils, rocks or any prohibited materials which may increase smoke generation;

(f) Make fewer, larger piles without compromising crew safety; and

(g) Piles should be seasoned until they can combust easily. Typically the curing period should be at least one summer.

Planning for the Burn Season

The following best management practices should be completed prior to burning:

- Compile a list of cut blocks, road sides, landings and other sites that have piles that need to be burned and have cured sufficiently.
- Develop a Burn Plan that includes each cut block; road networks and landings based on location, elevation and predicted acceptable burning conditions (e.g. first light snow).
- Check weather forecast; danger class reports and venting indices for planned burning window.
- Check conditions again on day of the burning and obtain a Burning Reference Number for larger piles (Category 3 open fire).

Check Equipment:

Complete an equipment check prior to the planned burning day including:

- Have sufficient fire tools, water tanks and pumps; fire extinguishers, radios and fire aid kits.
- If crews will be dispersed, have enough radios available.
- Enough PPE for all workers.
- Sufficient fuel or fire starter mixed such as Diesel/Gas (75/25) mix for drip torches (Flash 21 Jelling additive for snow covered piles); or propane for torches; and have the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available and known to all workers.
- Check that all ignition equipment is in good working order including drip torches; propane tanks; and propane hoses.

Crew Training

Burns operators will ensure all supervisors; ground crews and machine operators are trained in rules and standard operating procedures (SOPs) such as:

- All crew members must have training compatible with the Fire Line training modules S100 or S100A – refresher.
- Wildfire Act and Wildfire Regulation requirements; Environmental Management Act (EMA) and Open burning Smoke Control Regulations (OBSCR) requirements;
- Supervisors must be aware of medical conditions that may jeopardize an employee's safety (asthma).
- Smoke management strategies and Best Management Practices (BMPs);
- All relevant company-related Safe Work Procedures (SWPs);
- Burn pile construction, Burn pile ignition and Firefighting;
- Fuel handling, storage and spill reporting; and
- Site specific Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) with GPS coordinates

Prior to light up:

On the day of lighting up the piles:

- Review the burn or light-up plan; escape routes, contingency plans, hazards (e.g. danger trees, steep slopes and debris) and location of all piles to be ignited with the workers.
- Any danger trees observed by the crew should be reported; felled or assessed and flagged "no work"
- Park vehicles in a safe location ready for evacuation (e.g. facing towards town).
- Establish and discuss an emergency response plan including evacuation marshaling points.
- Establish check in intervals and check radio function; and reinforce that no one works alone (e.g. pairs)
- Confirm weather and venting index
- Mix fuels in a safe location- NO SMOKING!
- Check torches are safe to use-i.e. no parts are missing.

Lighting up piles

Follow your burn plan and only deviating after confirming with supervisor.

- If necessary to refuel torch notify team leader or supervisor.
- When using a propane torch, turn the flame to minimum when moving between piles.
- Use extra caution on steep slopes and around landing piles and be sure of footing and escape routes.
- Cease light up if fire is spreading into slash/timber; and extinguish, control and mop-up any escapements.
- Cease burning if you spill any light up fuel on yourself.
- Monitor burning rate and adjust light up rate.
- **Important - Continue to monitor burning piles at end of day and check piles next day for escapes.**