

## LESSON 3.4 – Fire Prevention

WILDFIRES HAVE ENORMOUS potential for destruction. In the right conditions, fires are possible in any area. For your safety, and for the safety of others living nearby, it is imperative neither you nor your operations are the cause of a wildfire.

Make sure you know who to call in the event of a fire. If 911 emergency assistance is not available in your area, write in the local emergency and fire response phone numbers on your job briefing in place of 911.

### CONDITIONS LEADING TO WILDFIRE

The risk of fire depends on many factors:

- Local conditions, such as weather, fuel, and topography.
- Dry and windy conditions create a higher risk.
- Sparks and embers caused by trees contacting power lines, or sparks or flame caused by malfunctioning electrical equipment on utility poles, can ignite wildfires.

### PREPARATIONS

In a fire prone area make sure you know how to get to safety if a fire gets out of control. Note the surrounding terrain, available fuels and weather conditions, and then define your escape route. You and your crew should know where to meet and have emergency phone numbers. The meeting point should be away from the anticipated path of a fire.

- Develop a communication plan. Confirm cell phone coverage or location of nearest phone. Know your specific worksite location and emergency numbers.
- Know the level of fire risk for the area you are working in. If applicable, be sure your job briefing covers wildfire prevention!
- Keep fire fighting tools, such as shovels, rakes and water backpacks available and ready.
- Have an escape plan with a prearranged meeting place. Know where the water sources and fire breaks are located.
- Be aware of conditions. On high fire danger days, be especially vigilant! Officials may restrict certain activities, including our operations, when conditions are extreme.

### FIRE PREVENTION

- Follow the rules! Make sure your actions don't cause any incidental contact between trees and power lines.
- Keep equipment in good operating condition. Make sure spark arrestors, mufflers and exhaust systems are clean and undamaged.
- Do not smoke in fire-prone areas. If you must smoke, do so only in a cleared area. Never flick ashes or butts onto dry forest floors or grass. Take cigarette butts with you and dispose of them properly.
- Do not park vehicles over top of dry grass or other flammable materials. The hot exhaust systems can ignite dry fuels. The same applies to chainsaws and other gas-powered tools and equipment.
- Report dead and dying trees that could fall onto power lines.
- Report electric hardware concerns that could spark a fire immediately.
- Check rights-of-way for items that could spark if struck by a mower head, then flag or remove item(s).
- Keep mower compartments free of debris, and check frequently.

**LESSON 3.4 – Fire Prevention, *continued***

**IF A FIRE STARTS**

If a fire starts, make every effort to put it out or at the least prevent it from spreading. When a fire is small, you have a better chance of keeping it under control. However, do not compromise your safety.

If a fire is taller than you, has jumped to the tree crowns, or cannot be safely controlled, **STOP FIRE FIGHTING EFFORTS AND GET TO A SAFE PLACE!** Remember, a sudden wind shift can affect the speed and direction of the fire.

**Fire Triangle**

Three (3) things must be present in order to ignite and sustain a fire:

- Heat
- Fuel
- Oxygen

A fire can be prevented, or controlled, by removing one or more of these components. For example:

- Water is very effective in extinguishing fires, since water removes the heat component.
- Use rakes, shovels, or other tools, to separate fire from its fuel source (grass/leaves/pine needles and other dead vegetation).
- Smothering a fire with dirt removes the oxygen source.

Always stay with a contained fire until emergency response teams arrive, since a sudden gust of wind or change in wind direction can reignite a seemingly controlled fire.

Report the fire to your supervisor or regional office.

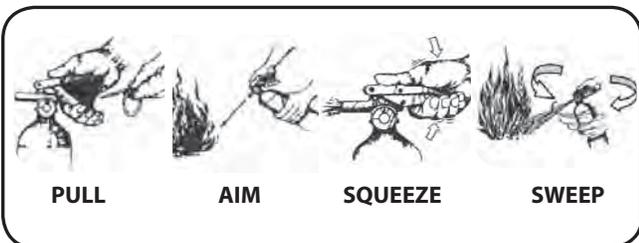
**COMPANY POLICY**

**Wildfire Prevention Plan**

Every region is required to have a Wildfire Prevention Plan in place, even if crews are working in a part of the country not normally prone to wildfires.

This policy is in effect because weather conditions can change drastically from year to year. An area that may not normally be threatened, may become prone to wildfires if weather patterns change, rainfall amounts lessen, and wind conditions are right and there's plenty of fuel to feed a fire.

***Crews shall have a copy of the plan in their work trucks at all times.***



*To remember how to use a fire extinguisher, think PASS.*

**USING A FIRE EXTINGUISHER**

Use only water or "Type A" extinguishers on wild fires. Use extinguishers sparingly to conserve water or propellant and maximize their usefulness.

- P** Pull the locking pin.
- A** Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire
- S** Squeeze the trigger all the way closed.
- S** Sweep side to side.