

## 2. OPERATING AREAS

- ***USFS Timber Sale Contract Standard B Provision B7.3 Fire Control (Suppression action required for fires in timber sale and/or adjacent to the timber sale)***

Every industrial operation has an area on which its activities are conducted. Some of these areas, such as mines, are in fixed locations for long periods of time. Others, such as logging and construction, are mobile and transitory, remaining in one location for only a few weeks or months. For some, such as petroleum and steam wells, the nature of the activity and of the fire problem changes over time (drilling vs. pumping and servicing). In all cases, for fire prevention purposes, the access routes between the scene of actual industrial operations and public roads are considered part of the operating area.

Although operators may be adversely affected by fires starting outside their operating area, and thus have considerable interest in preventing and suppressing such fires, they are legally liable only for those starting in their operating area. Therefore, if they own, lease, or otherwise control a large acreage but only operating on a portion thereof, it is to their advantage to make such fact a matter of record. For private timber harvesting operations in California and on federal land, the map required as part of the timber harvesting plan or the timber sale contract does this. For other types of industrial operations it can be accomplished by filing a map and declaratory letter with the appropriate fire protection agency. Some fires, such as “Act-of-God” (lightning), can be expected to start either on or in the vicinity of any operating area. The operator has a responsibility, both legal and moral, to anticipate and plan for these and to take necessary action when they occur.

Some general fire precautions apply equally to all types of industrial operating areas. These have been thoroughly set forth in federal and state laws, regulations and contract requirements for the timber harvesting industry. They are equally valid for mining, construction, or drilling operations.

### 2.1 Cleanliness

This is primarily a matter of recognizing and eliminating, or reducing to an acceptable level, fire hazards. The easiest of these to ignite are partially decomposed (punky) wood, duff, dry grass and loose or crumpled paper. Fire acceleration hazards which contribute most to the increased intensity and spread of fires are: slash, snags, spilled petroleum products, and piles of any kind of flammables.

It is not feasible, nor usually necessary, to clean up all the easily ignitable hazards on the entire operating area. They should, however, be removed from all high-risk areas. These areas include, but are not restricted to: refueling areas; locations of stationary or portable engines; welding, cutting or grinding operations; and personnel assembly areas where smoking and/or lunch or warming fires are allowed. The width or radius of the clearing, in order to be effective, will vary with the nature and size of the risk from 10 to 25 feet. Under certain special high-risk situations, 50 feet may be required. Where such clearances beyond 25 feet are needed, they must not only be initially made, but also subsequently maintained.

### 2.2 Smoking

- ***36CFR §261.52d (USFS fire restrictions pertaining to smoking on National Forests in California)***
- ***H&SC §13001 (Discarding lighted smoking material)***

- ***Title 14CCR §918.4 (Smoking and matches requirements)***
- ***Local Ordinances (Local restrictions pertaining to smoking)***

Every industrial operator must adopt and enforce rules relating to smoking for his/her operating area. Most effective, of course, are the complete prohibitions already in effect in some companies. Other measures include: prohibition at certain times, usually based on fire danger rating; prohibition except in certain designated areas; requirement of the smoker to find or make an area cleared of all flammable material; etc. Prohibition of smoking, except in designated areas which can be made and maintained safe for this purpose, is the course recommended for those companies which do not desire totally prohibiting smoking. Minimum smoking should not be allowed except in an area cleared to mineral soil, or other nonflammable base, with a minimum diameter of three feet.

It is illegal to discard any tobacco products or matches from a moving vehicle. On public roads, state and federal fire and police officers enforce this law. On private roads and operating areas, company rules and supervisors should enforce compliance. During critical fire periods smoking can be confined to an enclosed vehicle or designated area.



**Photograph 2-1.  
Smoker in a Properly Cleared Area**

### **2.3 Lunch and Warming Fires**

- ***PRC §4432 (Neglecting a campfire)***
- ***PRC §4425 (Violation of a campfire permit)***
- ***PRC §4433 (Campfire permit required)***
- ***PRC §4434 (Escape of a campfire)***
- ***Title 14CCR §918.5 (Lunch and warming fire requirements)***
- ***36CFR §261.5f (Campfire clearances required on National Forest land)***
- ***36CFR §261.52 (Campfire permits required and fire restrictions on National Forest land)***

Clearance requirements for lunch and warming fires (campfires) in an industrial operation are more restrictive than they are in a recreational setting. Unless built, maintained, and extinguished properly, they are as dangerous in one location as another. Some might assume that workers on industrial operations would be better trained, more careful, and more closely supervised in their use of fire than campers and other wildland visitors. The most common reason for escapes is the violation of one or more of the well-known and long-recognized safety rules for such fires. Rarely is the unpredictable, such as a gust of wind, responsible for an escape.

Lunch or warming fires should never be built without first providing a clearing to bare mineral soil, or other nonflammable base, for a minimum distance of 10 feet in all directions from the expected perimeter of the fire. The fire should not be permitted to become any larger than actually needed to cook or provide warmth. The fire should never be left unattended. Firefighting tools, especially a long-handled, round-point shovel, should be readily available in the immediate vicinity at all times while the fire is burning or glowing. Extinguishing of the fire must be thorough and complete. Preferably this is accomplished with water, and checked by ungloved hand. One person, ideally a foreman or other supervisor, should be made responsible and held accountable for the safety of the fire. A fire patrol person, or other specifically assigned individual, should check all such fire sites not less than one hour nor more than two hours after the fire is terminated.



**Photograph 2-2.  
Proper Clearance for a Lunch or Warming Fire**