

# \$afety \$aves

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The forest fire season in Montana is May 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> and within that time frame we have forest fire rules and regulations for logging operations. As wet as it has been this spring these requirements are in place even if the sign in front of the DNRC or USFS office says “Low Fire Danger”! Especially with as much dead fuel as there is in many of Montana’s forests things can burn even when it is wet out. Bottom line we all know we can go from mudded out to fire danger in a short time in Montana so make sure your job has everything required by law during this time frame.

**RULE IV-EQUIPMENT**; This rule is specific to Spark Arrestors. It states that all internal combustion engines must be equipped with an approved and effective spark arresting system. But there are exemptions for the following vehicles. Automobiles and light trucks of less than 23,000 GVW when all exhaust gasses pass through a properly installed and maintained exhaust system baffle type muffler and tailpipe. Vehicles with glass pack mufflers do not qualify for the exemption. Heavy duty trucks of 23,000 GVW or greater, with a muffler and vertical stack exhaust system extending above the cab. Vehicles with other spark arresting systems providing equal or increased effectiveness. Such vehicles must be inspected and have written authorization from the recognized fire protection agency. Equipment used for commercial, ranching, or industrial activities must meet the fire extinguisher and tool requirements listed in

**RULE VIII-FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND FIREFIGHTING TOOLS**; Chainsaw operators shall carry a fully charged and operable fire extinguisher, minimum capacity of 8-ounce liquid or 1-pound dry chemical, with a 4BC or higher rating. Vehicles and equipment, mobile or stationary, with a combustion engine/motor used for commercial, ranching, or industrial activities must have one operable, dry chemical fire extinguisher with a minimum 2 ½ pound capacity and 4BC or high rating. Chainsaw operators shall maintain one usable shovel at chainsaw fueling sites. All commercial, ranching, or industrial activities must have: One usable shovel or Pulaski with each vehicle and equipment with an internal combustion engine/motor, mobile or stationary. One backpack pump with each vehicle and with any equipment used off road, mobile or stationary, with an internal combustion engine/motor, that cannot be used to build fire lines and is being operated on combustible material. A backpack pump is 5-gallon minimum container with attached handpump and full of water at all times.

Other agencies and or landowner may require additional equipment and water handling.

Please remember if you do start a fire on your logging job you need to notify the fire protection agency no matter what size. When calling in the fire have the following information available; location (latitude/longitude or section, township range), landmarks (mountain, drainage, road, river, lake), ownership, fire size (approximate acreage), spread of fire and direction, values at risk (timber, powerlines, structures), fuels, wind, topography and weather conditions. Also think about resources both in manpower and equipment/water that will be needed to suppress the fire. If you can initial attack the fire; do so but don’t get in over your head. If you do start suppression tactics remember back to our fire training and **LCES; LOOKOUTS, COMMUNICATION ESCAPE ROUTES and SAFETY ZONES**. Also remember to start your suppression tactics from an anchor point such as a road or clearing.

Lastly make sure your tools and equipment are in good working condition. Fire Extinguishers should be serviced yearly and checked monthly. They are not good for much other than a club if they are not charged! Also check condition of handles on shovels and Pulaskis; if they have been in the rack in the back of your pickup for the last year, you better check them! A loose axe head can be very dangerous; same with a shovel. The seals can go out in the back-pack pumps so make sure they are functional as well. Pumpers and trailers that are required for agencies and some landowners are usually required to be checked periodically to make sure they run. Hope you all have a safe and productive logging season and less smoke in the air than last year!!