

Executing the Burn

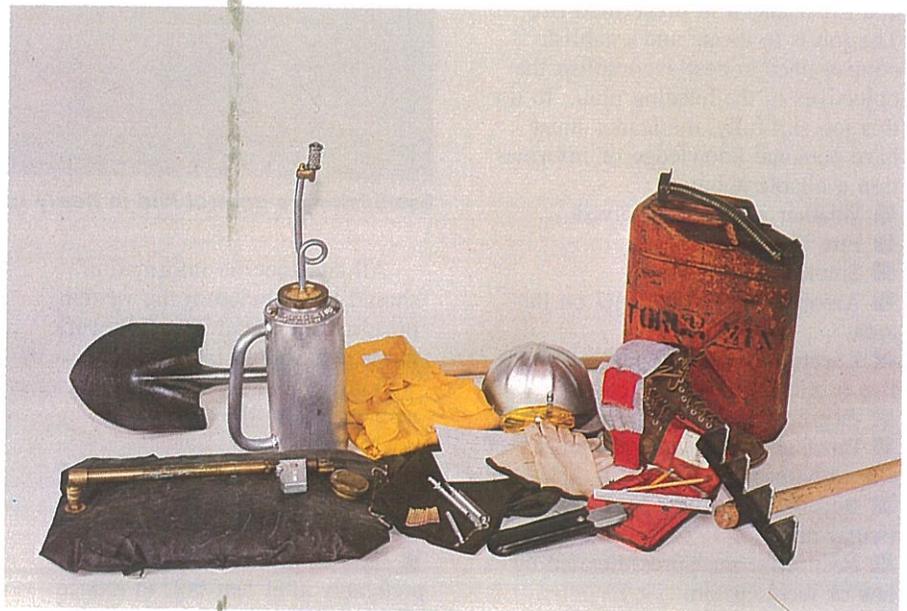
There are few days of good prescribed burning weather during the year. When these days arrive, give top priority to burning. With adequate preparation, burning can begin without loss of opportunity.

A prescribed burning crew consisting of a burning boss and 3 to 6 crew members can handle a burn of several hundred acres. The leader should be an experienced prescribed burner with an understanding of fire behavior. Such a crew often consists of 3 torch people equipped with hand tools, and a tractor operator with a plow unit for emergency use. If aerial ignition is used, the ground crew often consists of a tractor-plow unit and a 2-person crew with 2 pickups. The aerial crew generally consists of a pilot and machine operator when the ping-pong ball system is used. If the pilot is not an experienced fire behavior observer, the burning boss should also be in the helicopter (as allowed) where he/she will have a relatively unobstructed view of the developing fire. Use of the helitorch can require 2 to 3 additional ground support people to mix the fuel and position the drums depending upon torch configuration and company/agency policy. Disposal of any unused helitorch fuel mix can present additional logistical problems; alumagel is toxic and should never just be dumped.

Radios for communication are essential for aerial ignition and for any large burn. Behavior of a prescribed burn will vary because of roads or other openings in the timber stand, varying fuel conditions, changing weather, and the firing technique used. Two vehicles are essential to permit maximum mobility of the burning boss and crews. Chain saws are useful additions to the equipment supply.

The burning boss should have the crew ready to fire the area as early in the day as conditions permit, leaving

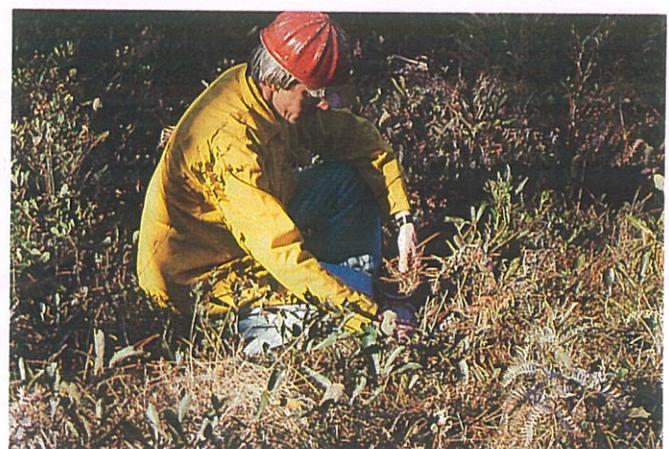
maximum time for mopup and patrol of the lines. Normally, plan to complete any one job within a standard workday. The burning boss must make sure the crew has the proper clothing and safety equipment and is in good physical shape. Proper clothing includes long-sleeve fire resistant or cotton shirts, pants without cuffs, leather boots with non-skid soles, safety glasses, hardhat, gloves, and plenty of drinking water. During the summer, the possibility of heat exhaustion and heat stroke must be considered.



Examples of prescribed burning equipment



Post smoke warning signs



Check fuel moisture of duff and litter

Checklist

- Make sure all equipment is in working order and safe to use.
- Carry burning plans and maps to the job.
- Check the weather before starting to burn and keep updated throughout the day.
- Check all control lines, clean out needles and leaves, and reinforce as necessary.
- Notify adjoining property owners and local fire control organizations before starting fire.

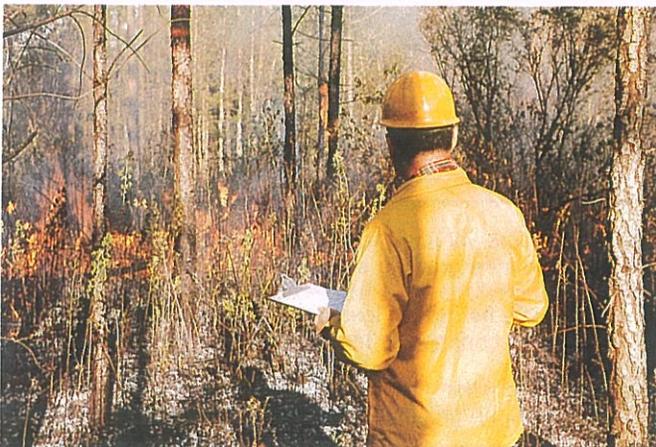
- Instruct crew on procedures, including safety precautions and the proper operation of equipment and use of hand tools.
- Post signs on public roads and be prepared to control traffic if potential exists for smoke to reduce visibility.
- Check duff and soil for dampness.
- Test burn with a small fire before firing; check the fire and smoke behavior to make sure the fire is burning as expected. If it is not, decide whether the observed behavior is acceptable. This is the time to

- cancel the burn if you are not comfortable with the observed behavior.
- Inform crew of starting point and firing sequence. Give each member a map.
- Have a means of instant communication with all crew members. Portable radios are very useful.
- Be alert to changing conditions, and be prepared to change burning techniques or plow the fire out if an emergency arises.
- Burn so the wind will carry smoke away from sensitive areas.
- Mopup and patrol perimeters constantly during the operation, and thereafter until there is no further danger of fire escape or smoke problems.



Small test fire to check behavior of fire and smoke

***“Give Prescribed Burning
TOP PRIORITY
When Burning Weather Arrives”***



Constantly monitor fire behavior



Prompt mopup will minimize residual smoke