



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Route To:

Subject: Industrial Fire Precautions -- Project Activity Level

To: Forest Supervisors and Directors

I have decided to implement the Project Activity Level (PAL) system with its associated fire precautions for managing industrial operations associated with timber sale, stewardship and service contracts.

Based on an evaluation of both the historic Sale Activity Level (SAL) system and the Project Activity Level (PAL) system, I have determined that adopting the PAL system will reduce the risk of damaging operations fires while maximizing industrial operations ability to work on the National Forests. This decision was made after considering comments by industry groups, review by cooperators, and making additional modifications to contract provisions.

In adopting the PAL system, I recognize it as a superior approach compared to the SAL system based upon the supporting data which was used in the development of the PAL system.

The use of PAL, with revised contract provisions, will continue for all service contracts.

Adoption of PAL will begin October 1, 2005, for all new timber sale and stewardship contracts. This will require all contracts offered after October 1, 2005, to use PAL.

PAL is not intended for use with force account work and special use permits, with the exception of industrial vegetation management activities associated with a permit.

It is critical that PAL be implemented in a consistent manner. To that end I am directing that the following occur:

Planning

During project planning at the Forest or District, the existing Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) network representation for the project site needs to be considered.

Without invalidating the utility of the long term weather record from the RAWS network, refinement of the network to improve its utility for all uses, including PAL, should be considered. On rare occasions this could include moving existing stations to improve their overall usefulness, or adding additional temporary RAWS stations for key project areas where the network does not accurately reflect the project area conditions. In these instances, temporary weather stations will be provided and maintained by the Forest Service at Forest Service expense.



Contract provisions

A set of contract provisions (specified fire precautions) tied to PAL have been developed and are attached for use in timber sale, stewardship and service contracts. Some of the provisions of PAL may result in increased costs to contractors (for example increased patrol staffing under some conditions), and potential changes to the number of fire shut down days. Specific direction will be provided for appraisal allowances to account for these possible increased costs.

Consistency in variances

PAL provides for variances based on local considerations by line officers with their staff. While this is one of the strengths of PAL, industry has expressed concern about consistency in approach and rationale, especially on neighboring units. As part of implementation, the Director of Fire, Fuels, and Aviation Management will coordinate informational training on PAL variances for line officers and their staff.

Monitoring

Prior to implementation of PAL for timber sale contracts beginning October 1, 2005, Forests will track PAL on their units to provide for further refinement if necessary. Over the next couple of years we will also monitor the use of PAL and make adjustments as appropriate to maximize program effectiveness.

Details of implementation

The Directors of Fire, Fuels, and Aviation Management and Natural Resource Management will develop and provide to the Forests further detailed implementation direction for PAL.

In closing I would like to thank the numerous personnel on the Forests who helped develop PAL. Their hard work has given us a credible, quality approach to reduce the risk of equipment operation fires while at the same time providing for critically important vegetation treatments.

/s/ Kent P. Connaughton (for)
JACK A. BLACKWELL
Regional Forester

cc: Stephen Bishop, Rob Griffith

Enclosures: PAL Variance Checklist
Fire C Provisions
Fire Plan for Construction and Service Contracts