

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Program

Technical Specifications

Fuel Hazard Reduction Practices

State of Montana, Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) guidelines will be followed when accomplishing all fuel hazard reduction practices. Consult your Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) Service Forester for information regarding these. A Hazard Reduction Agreement (HRA) must be obtained from the DNRC office if any wood products are sold as a result of your hazardous fuel reduction project.

A. Thinning

1. Non-commercial thinning for Fire Hazard Fuels Reduction:

This type of thinning is not a standard thinning to enhance the volume of the remaining trees.

This thinning is designed to: 1) create space (on the average, at least 10 feet) between tree crowns to reduce the chances of a running crown fire; 2) to treat fuels between the ground and crowns of larger trees by removing ladder fuels to reduce the chances of a ground fire from becoming a crown fire; and 3) improve the health of your forest.

The 10-foot crown spacing between crowns will vary given the timber type, topography, amount of natural openings throughout the area and overall crown densities. Landowners desires will be melded into the design of the project as much as possible and still be able to meet the over all grant objectives of reducing the fire risk in the area.

It will be the responsibility of the landowner to dispose of this material in accordance with the Downed Woody Fuels Cleanup specifications listed below.

2. Commercial thinning for Fire Hazard Fuels Reduction:

This type of thinning is also not designed to enhance the volume of the remaining timber. It is designed to create space to prevent the chances of a running crown fire. On the average, at least 10 feet between crowns needs to be maintained. The 10-foot spacing between crowns will vary given the timber type, topography, amount of natural openings throughout the area and overall crown densities. Landowners desires will melded into the design of the project as much as possible and still be able to meet the overall objectives of reducing fire risk in the area.

Material in this category is generally merchantable and will be up to the landowner to decide what to do with this material. It will also be the responsibility of the landowner to dispose of this material in accordance with the Downed Woody Fuels Cleanup specifications listed below. Proceeds from selling this merchantable material can be applied by the landowner toward their portion of the cost share. Landowners retains the decision to either sell their merchantable material or dispose of it by other means.

3. Hazard Reduction Thinning in Streamside Management Zones:

State of Montana, Department of Natural Resources & Conservation will be involved in decisions regarding thinning within Streamside Management Zones. Best management practices will be followed.

B. Tree Pruning for: 1) defensible space trees; 2) in previously thinned stands; and 3) in conjunction with thinning.

Pruning of all residual trees (trees left after thinning) will be accomplished to a minimum height of 12 feet above ground level or to a height of 1/3rd the total height of the tree, whichever is less.

This means cutting all branches off the bole of the tree, separating the branch at the bole not leaving any branch stub longer than 3 inches.

Pruning can occur within riparian or upland areas. Best management practices will be followed.

C. Downed Woody Fuels Cleanup:

This could apply for the following practices: 1) removal of slash created by thinning and/or pruning; 2) fuel hazard thinning already completed but landowner wants to cost share the cleanup of the slash; 3) cleanup of downed woody materials on the forest floor not created by thinning or pruning but is naturally occurring; 4) cost-share is not tied up to how this would be completed but would provide funding toward completion of this work. State of Montana, best management practices will be followed.

Specification: All woody debris other than duff and litter will be picked up and either handpiled for later burning or chipped in place with chips spread across the forest floor in an even manner or taken off site to be disposed of by either burning or chipping. All downed woody debris is defined as any fuels greater than 1 inch in diameter on the large end. Prescribed burning of slash that is lying on the forest floor (underburning) is acceptable as long as it meets the disposal specifications outlined below for prescribed burning.

1. Handpiling:

Specification: Handpiles should be designed in such a way that will properly dispose of all slash within each pile by burning. It will be up to each landowners discretion as to how this is accomplished but all material in all piles should be 100% disposed of by burning or by chipping or by hauling off site to another location to be disposed of at a later date.

2. Chipping:

Specification: Chipping is another good way of disposing of all slash created by hazardous fuels reduction. If this is the chosen method by a landowner to dispose of the slash, all material greater than 1 inch on the large end on site should be 100% disposed of by this method. Chips can be either spread across the forest floor in an even manner (at a maximum depth of 2 inches) or hauled off site to be disposed of in another manner. This is at the discretion of the landowner.

3. Handpile Burning:

Specification: Burning of hand piles will be done in such a way that will completely consume or dispose of all material contained in each pile. It is the responsibility of the landowner to obtain all proper permits to accomplish this work.

4. Prescribed Burning (Underburning):

Specification: Burning of slash and woody debris under standing timber will be done in such a way that will completely dispose (consume) all woody material less than 1" in diameter. All woody debris and slash greater than 1 inch in diameter must be disposed of in such a way by underburning to sufficiently reduce the fire risk to a level that will allow wildland firefighters to direct attack a fire within the area during the peak fire season. If the underburning does not accomplish this goal, additional slash treatment must be completed (handpiling or chipping) in order to further reduce the fire hazard. This will be determined by the Natural Resources Field Technician inspection after the prescribed burn.