



# BEETLE BITE

JULY 2010

## Special Edition

### Bark Beetle Safety Guidelines Issued

Cal Wettstein, incident commander for the Bark Beetle Incident Management Organization (IMO) introduced safety guidelines during a safety stand down on June 28, 2010. These guidelines will create work-safety consistency across the three forests in the Bark Beetle Theater. These guidelines do not replace existing protocols in place on forests and districts. They serve as the minimum procedures to be followed by all employees and volunteers working within the bark beetle impacted areas.

“An extraordinary amount of work this past year has gone into preparing employees to work in a changing field environment as a result of the bark beetle epidemic. Summer brings with it a number of distractions that can sometimes cloud situational awareness of this hazardous work environment. It is imperative that employees do not become complacent in their attention to their personal safety and to the safety of employees who they lead or supervise,” said Bark Beetle Incident Commander Cal Wettstein.

The 14 key guidelines and procedures critical for consistency within the theater are:



Safety must be the first and foremost consideration for everyone.

#### Pre-Work Activity Preparedness

- 1. Bark Beetle Hazard Tree Awareness Training** – All field going seasonal and permanent employees including volunteers and detailers, as well as those from Supervisor and Regional Offices, will have documented completion of the approved IMO Hazard Tree Awareness Training. Please contact the IMO Safety Officers for assistance with the training if needed.
- 2. Weather Forecasts** – All field going personnel, both crews and individuals, will obtain a **daily** weather report before leaving for their assigned work sites. It is suggested that individual units work with their hosting dispatch centers to obtain daily forecast information and develop procedures for access to the forecast and/or dissemination of the forecast. This weather information will be documented and incorporated into all daily safety sessions and updates should be obtained throughout the day as changing conditions are observed.
- 3. Job Hazard Analysis (JHA)** – The Job Hazard Analysis is the approved process for identifying hazards associated with work activities and the appropriate mitigation tool for these hazards. This process is outlined in the Forest Service Health and Safety Code, FSH 6709.11. Particular attention should be paid to that section outlining the required personal protective equipment for work activities. Safety sessions prior to starting work will be conducted on a daily basis and documented to the unit's files. The Bark Beetle Website is a primary source of reference for materials to include in the daily safety sessions.
- 4. Risk Assessments** – Risk Assessment models are available for use and are being utilized on some units. Risk-decision making processes should compliment but not replace the Job Hazardous Analysis process required of all employees.



- 5. Vehicles** – Ensure that field vehicles have tools available for removing trees that block travel associated with returning to the duty station. Drivers and/or passengers must have training and skills consistent with the tools available for clearing.

## Communications

- 6. Radio Use Training** – All field-going and office-based employees with radio staffing responsibilities will complete the appropriate level of training for proper radio use. This training will include familiarity with available frequencies in the event of an emergency.
- 7. Radios** – All field-going employees and crews will be provided radio communications (hand-held or vehicle mounted) while in the field. Satellite phones or SPOT devices are appropriate where it is determined that radio coverage is not possible. Cell phones are not approved as the primary source of communication. Reliable communications will be established at every work location prior to performing work assignments. In addition, all units will prepare an office radio staffing plan to assure there is communication with personnel in the field or traveling. This plan should include coverage outside normal working hours. **Employees and/or crews will disengage immediately when communications are lost.**
- 8. Check-Out Procedures** – Each District, Supervisor, and Regional Offices will have established check-out and check-in procedures that will include but are not limited to employee/crew leader, destination and expected time of return. These procedures will include contacts for after-hour returns.
- 9. Daily Radio Checks** – All units will have, and all employees will adhere to an established set of radio check-in procedures and times to assure that reliable communications are intact. Employees will notify their home unit any time that a specific work location is changed.

## Disengagement

- 10. Disengagement** - If it is determined that there is an unacceptable risk of continuing with a work assignment based on a risk assessment or through personal observations which may include a significant change in weather conditions, employees will disengage from the area. Units with disengagement and documentation procedures in place are approved to continue using them until such time theater-wide guidelines are prepared and distributed. All disengagements will be reported immediately to an employee's supervisor and/or Line Officer and will be documented to the SHIPS data base as a near-miss.

## Documentation

- 11. Near-Miss** - A **near-miss** is an unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness, or damage - but had the potential to do so. All units are required to utilize the Safety and Health Information Portal System (SHIPS) as the primary theater-wide documentation base for near-misses associated with bark beetle mortality trees and/or green residual trees. All significant near-misses will be reported immediately to an employee's supervisor and/or Line Officer. A near miss will include observations of any tree failures within 1 ½ tree lengths of where an employee is working. The IMO is currently developing additional documentation alternatives to assure timely input to SHIPS. Employees needing assistance with SHIPS should contact their unit Safety Manager. All employees are asked to additionally document into SHIPS their observations of extensive stand failures during work travel.
- 12. Fire Personnel** – All fire personnel will follow current Risk Management and Risk Refusal procedures and documentation, as specified in the Incident Response Pocket Guide, PMS 461. These procedures will be supplemented with the Theater's Fire Operations Guidance prepared in conjunction with the NIMO in the Bark Beetle Strategic Plan.
- 13. Medical and Communication Plans** – Each unit will complete and make available to all employees a ICS-205 Communications Plan and ICS 206 Medical Plan. These Plans should be made available to all incoming detailers and visiting personnel.
- 14. Agency Administrator Guide to Critical Incident Management (PMS-926)** – Each Line Officer should already have in place a current and updated PMS 926, "Agency Administrator Guide to Critical Incident Management for 2010." When complete, this Guide needs to be accessible to all unit employees including acting in the event an incident occurs resulting in a serious injury or fatality.