FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION FACT SHEET

A Hazard Reduction Agreement (HRA) must be obtained before harvesting wood products that are planned to be sold from private lands in Montana. History has shown that forest fires starting in or burning into slash or other logging residues are much harder to control, cause more damage, and cost much more to suppress. Montana State Law, Sections 76-13-401 through 76-13-414 MCA, requires that forest fire hazards resulting from logging, thinning, right-of-way clearing or forest clearing on private forest lands in Montana be reduced by at least 90%. The following are frequently asked questions regarding the Hazard Reduction Law.

Q. WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE LAW IF I AGREE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR TREATING THE SLASH?

A. As a (landowner, logger, consulting forester, or purchasing mill), you must:

1. Obtain an HRA from the State before cutting any timber.

   Applications can be found at: HRA APPLICATION

2. Ensure all purchasers have a copy of the HRA prior to delivering logs or other products.
3. Treat the slash and other hazards as prescribed in the Agreement.
4. Comply with other terms of the Agreement.

Q. HOW DOES THE FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION AGREEMENT WORK?

A. The law requires that the person or entity responsible for treating the slash hazard enter into an HRA with the State's DNRC Forestry Division **BEFORE** cutting any forest product from private forest lands in Montana. Applications can be found online or at any DNRC field office and require a map and property geocode of the proposed operation. The Agreement is a legal and binding contract between the State and the contractor.

The HRA requires that the contractor (the person who signs the HRA) pay a $25 non-refundable administrative fee and posts a performance bond. This bond is usually a cash payment that the purchasing mill withholds from log delivery payments and forwards to the State. Currently, the bond is $6.00 per thousand board feet (MBF). Additional fees for administration and MSU Extension Forestry add another $1.15 per MBF for a total of $7.15/MBF.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BOND?

A. The State holds the bond in an account that has a unique number assigned to that particular HRA agreement. After the hazard reduction is completed as prescribed by the HRA, the State returns $6.00 per thousand board feet and retains $0.85 for program costs. The remaining $0.30 is sent to Montana State University Extension Forestry for landowner Education programs. If a contractor cuts more than 500,000 feet in a calendar year under a specific HRA, the State will refund any administrative fee withholdings for the added volume.

Q. WHAT METHOD OF HAZARD REDUCTION IS TYPICALLY USED?

A. The type of slash treatment is not mandated. Typically, slash is burned in piles as it is the

lowest cost method. However, there are other acceptable methods as shown below.

1. Lopping and scattering remaining treetops and limbs
2. Crushing
3. Broadcast burning
4. Chipping or mastication of the slash
5. Removing the slash for firewood, post and poles or other consumptive purposes
6. Bury it
7. A combination of two or more of these methods

Q. WHAT IS AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF HAZARD REDUCTION?

A. You must reduce slash to a level at which a fire would burn with a flame length of 4 feet or less. Specific hazard reduction standards are required for high value and special management areas, including around residential structures, public campgrounds, high value communication structures and precommercial thinning units. Here the requirement is reduced to a 2-foot flame length. Consult your local Service Forester if you have questions on this. The DNRC will determine if the 90% reduction requirement has been met.

A landowner desiring other specifications such as complete slash cleanup should specify that in their timber sale contract. The state will inspect and pass/fail hazard reduction only to what state law requires.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CONTRACTOR DOESN'T DO THE HAZARD REDUCTION WORK?

A. Hazard reduction should be completed within 18 months following the start of the cutting operation. If that timeline is not meet the DNRC will notify the contractor that the slash needs to be abated and will request a plan for getting the work completed. If the hazard is not reduced in an acceptable fashion or timeframe the state may assume the hazard reduction responsibilities and do the work at cost plus twenty percent (20%) as a penalty. The DNRC may also assign the responsibility to another willing party .

For further information about hazard reduction, contact your local Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation office.

DNRC SERVICE FORESTER INFORMATION

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