

SOMERVILLE FIRE NO. 10 OF 1968/69.

REPORT BY N. BUKELIS

This fire was detected from Somerville Tower at 0754 on January 10th, 1969. It burnt 0.15 acres of P. halepensis in Compartment 26 and is notable because it caused very little damage despite the time of the year.

Sequence of Events.

- 0754 Towerman reports smoke on first observation.
- 0756 Somerville outfit of 5 men in 2 H.D.'s and one L/D depart from Headquarters.
- 0800 Somerville men arrive at fire, no outside help needed.
- 0805 Running fire stopped. Commence mop up.
- 0840 Bukelis telephones Hilton Police. Boyd returns to normal work.
- 0900 Police arrive.
- 0930 All leave fire except one man with H/D who remains to saturate the whole burnt area. This is completed by 1 p.m.

Topography and Fuel.

The burnt area is on a hill crest in a well grown stand of P. halepensis, planted 1931. Present stocking about 150 T.P.A. Last thinning in 1963. High pruned in 1944. Needlebed burnt winter 1967.

On the ground there was a compacted "duff" layer 1 to 3 inches thick overlain by nearly an inch of loose needles plus some old felling slash. Also plenty of dry grass on extraction tracks.

Weather.

The fire occurred 20 days after rain and this was only an isolated fall of 9 points on December 21st. The intervening period was mainly hot with 6 days of temperatures in the 100° to 110° range.

Weather on the morning of the fire:

Time	Dry Bulb	Wet Bulb	R.H.	Est. Tower Wind	F.D.I.
0730	63	60	83	SSW 5 m.p.h.	0.28
0830	71	68	85	SSW 5 m.p.h.	0.36

APPENDIX 2.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

	<u>Attended Fire</u>	<u>At Office</u>
COLLIE	6 Officers 3 Overseers 14 Men	2 Officers
HARVEY	4 Officers 2 Overseers 10 Men	2 Officers
KIRUP		6 Officers 2 Overseers 8 Men
DWELLINGUP		7 Officers 2 Overseers 2 Gangs

All with supporting H.D. Units and transport.

Fire behaviour.

Flame heights were between 9 inches and 2 feet with an average of, say 15 inches. Due to the light wind there was little difference between head and flank fire and the shape of the burnt patch is roughly circular.

Rates of spread could not be measured during the short time of suppression. Possibly the fire had burnt for 1 or 2 hours before detection. The cause remains unknown.

Damage.

There are 20 trees in the burnt area. One bole is blackened to 15 feet and has been attacked by ips. The remainder average only 5 feet of blackening and have no insect damage to date. There is no crown scorch at all despite a canopy level of only 20 feet.

Some light bleeding of resin is visible on 8 to 10 boles. This, however, bears no relation to the height of but blackening. In fact, a tree of the same species which received severe crown scorch in another fire did not bleed at all.

Suppression Costs.

Wages : \$16. Vehicle + pumpers \$13.44

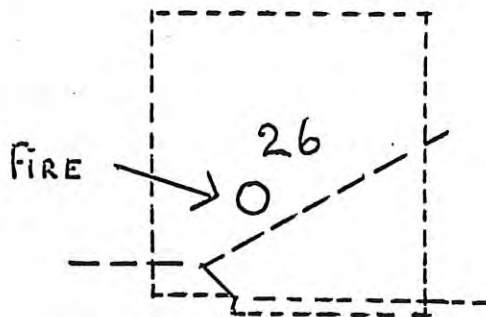
This included mopping up and patrols.

Comments.

1. Without doubt the absence of serious damage was due to both the mild weather and previous winter burning.
2. The essential difference between the effects of this fire and those of a winter burn is the amount of ground fuel consumed.

This fire burnt all the old wood on the ground, regardless of size, and also 90% of the duff layer.

3. As an additional detection measure an early morning observation at 6 a.m. was introduced following this fire.



POSITION SKETCH : 10 CH = 1 INCH.