

MANAGEMENT OF POTENTIAL HAZARD AREAS FOR USER SAFETY

State forests, by their very nature, have a variety of hazards for people that are a function of their “natural” condition. These hazards may include geological (steep hills, cliffs, caves), hydrological (lakes, streams), botanical (dead trees, poisonous plants), and faunal (animal bites, stings). These hazards, by being part of the nature of forests, should be considered inherent. Any user should reasonably expect these hazards at a forest.

There are other hazards at state forests, however, that are the result of management activities. These are hazards that result from activities such as construction, vegetation management, and facility maintenance. Generally these hazards can be divided into three categories for handling.

The first category would be hazards that are very minimal, or that are of such a nature that reasonable persons would avoid it. No general public warning of the hazard is necessary. For example, if an employee is mowing the grass, a user is unlikely to run into the path of the mower, and likewise the employee will likely avoid mowing areas with users.

The second type of hazard may be one where the hazard is minor, but it is deemed serious enough by the management or it may be perceived serious enough by the public that it is prudent to post a hazard sign. These are hazards that are not considered to be generally of an immediate life-threatening nature. This would be a situation similar to a grocery store where a sign warns of a wet floor, but access is not restricted. An example on the properties would be the posting of “Trucks Entering Highway” signs on public roads where visibility is limited for haul road entry and exit.

The third type of hazard is where the hazard is significant. These are often circumstances where the public would not be fully cognizant of the hazard, and the hazard may pose an imminent threat for serious injury. In these circumstances, an evaluation by the property staff may determine a need to close the area to public entry. An example of this is a shelterhouse rehabilitation where a person would not likely to know the potential hazards in the work.

All properties will maintain a public bulletin board in the vicinity of the property office, or a primary, visible public entry point. This bulletin board will be used for the posting of many hazardous areas.

Hazards That Require Hazard Posting

Work activities should be evaluated for potential public safety concerns. Examples of activities that may pose a potential safety concern include trail construction, structure rehabilitation, timber harvesting, wildlife habitat improvement, infrastructure

rehabilitation, roadwork, and recreation site construction. Generally, any activity involving the use of heavy equipment may be a potential public safety concern.

If a property evaluates a work activity and determines there is a minor potential public safety concern, the property will post the area/structure as a hazard area. The area will be posted as follows.

The hazard will be posted at the property office, the area/structure, and/or the property bulletin board. The hazard will be posted with a sign at the affected area/structure and at obvious public entry points into the area/structure – at parking units, along public roads, on fire/access roads, at doorways, and on trails.

The signs to post the area/structure will read

**“HAZARD AREA
AREA MAY CONTAIN MINOR HAZARD TO PUBLIC SAFETY”**

in large, bold type. These can be reusable signs ordered through a local sign shop. Posted with the sign will be a brief description of the hazard area/structure (compartment/tract, trail name, shelterhouse, road, etc.) and a brief description of the hazard (chemical application, unusual vehicle traffic). List the property contact for the public to go to for further information. A map, drawing, or sketch (as appropriate) showing the hazard area will also be posted. Where exposed to the weather, these descriptions will be appropriately weatherproofed (lamine, etc.).

Postings at the property office and/or the property bulletin board will be a description of the hazard as above.

All postings should be checked during the hazard period to ensure maintenance. Missing postings will be replaced. Once the hazard has ceased, the postings will be removed.

Hazards That Require Closing for Public Safety

Occasionally various areas of any property are under some type of work activity that may cause a safety concern for general public use. In those circumstances, it is prudent to temporarily close and post an area closed for general public entry. This is pursuant to DNR Property Regulations 312 IAC 8-2-1 Section 1(a).

Work activities should be evaluated for potential public safety concerns. Examples of activities that may pose a potential safety concern include trail construction, structure rehabilitation, timber harvesting, wildlife habitat improvement, infrastructure rehabilitation, roadwork, and recreation site construction. Generally, any activity involving the use of heavy equipment may be a potential public safety concern.

If a property evaluates a work activity and determines there is significant potential public safety concern, the property will close the area/structure to public entry. The closing will be posted as follows.

The closing will be posted with signs at the property office and the property bulletin board. The closing will be posted at the area/structure to be closed and at obvious public entry points into the area/structure – at parking units, along public roads, on fire/access roads, at doorways, and on trails. A copy of each posting will be sent to the Section Head.

The signs to close the area/structure will read

**“SAFETY AREA
AREA TEMPORARILY CLOSED TO PUBLIC ENTRY”**

in large, bold type. Underneath in smaller type will be a brief description of the closed area/structure (compartment/tract, trail name, shelterhouse, road, etc.) and a brief description of the hazard (construction debris, tree trimming – falling limbs, land clearing for wildlife food plot, etc.). List the property contact for the public to contact for further information. A map, drawing, or sketch (as appropriate) showing the closed safety area will also be posted. There exposed to the weather, these signs will be appropriately weatherproofed (laminated, etc.).

In addition, all recreational trails that are adjacent to or go through a safety area will be temporarily rerouted away from the safety area or closed. Rerouted trails must be adequately marked so users follow the appropriate route.

All postings should be regularly checked during the closed period to ensure maintenance. Missing postings will be promptly replaced. Once the need for the safety area has ceased, the postings will be promptly removed, and any trail reroutes will be discontinued. Areas will be closed for the minimum time necessary and will cover the minimum area needed to ensure public safety.

For Clark and Jackson-Washington, be sure to coordinate any work in the Knobstone Trail corridor with the Division of Outdoor Recreation.

Chemical Application

Chemical applications contain many hazards real and perceived. These guidelines are designed to help deal with the situations involving chemicals. In general, chemicals can be divided into two types – household and industrial.

Household chemicals are those products that can be bought over-the-counter by any member of the general public. The products included in this group are cleaners, lubricants, pesticides, and disinfectants. These products will often have few, if any,

limitations on application and area reentry (human contact). These products should be applied according to the label directions. If the product label does specify a no-reentry period, then the treated area will be posted as a closed area for the period stated.

Industrial chemicals are those products that are not generally purchased by the public. This includes products such as cleaners, lubricants, pesticides, and disinfectants. These products will often have extensive limitations on application and area reentry (human contact). These products should be applied according to label directions, and where appropriate, under the direction of a properly trained person. If the product label specifies a no-reentry period, then the treated area will be posted as a closed area for the period stated. This is very similar to the posting of suburban yards when treated by lawn care companies.

Some pesticides create a situation where even beyond the no-reentry period there may be or may be perceived to be a hazard in some forms of contact. An example of this are slow-acting herbicides that may be sprayed on edible plants. The edible plants may absorb the herbicide but may not exhibit a reaction until well after reentry is allowed. In these cases, a hazard posting should be maintained until the plants definitively exhibit the treatment.

These guidelines will apply to products used by properties and under the supervision of properties. In some cases there are utility lines with permits on properties that must receive permission to apply chemical treatments. If permission is granted, it should include the requirement that the treated areas be posted for the hazard.

Some utility easements are under more lenient terms or were established prior to state ownership. In these cases, the properties should request posting when possible. However, the State has no authority to enforce any requirements other than those spelled out in the easement.