



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Agricultural Experiment Station

Safety Considerations When Using a Flame Thrower

Peter Smallidge, Cornell University, Department of Natural Resources. Ithaca, NY 14853. pjs23@cornell.edu 607 / 592 – 3640. www.ForestConnect.info

Flame throwers are powerful tools that require considerable attention to ensure they are used safely and with the desired results. Consider the following.

1. Flame temperatures are on the order of 1500° F or more. That's really hot! Be careful to avoid contact of the flame or the flame wand with anything that might combust or melt.
2. Have a detailed plan for what you want to accomplish with the flame thrower. Plan for unforeseen conditions. Know how to react if someone is injured or a ground fire starts. Have access to the phone number for the local fire department. Pre-advise the local fire department of your plans and seek their input.
3. Flame operators should wear safety glasses to protect eyes from embers and debris. Additional useful PPE includes flame retardant gloves, long pants, and flame retardant foot wear. A water supply for fire suppression should be accessible.
4. Do not operate the flame thrower if you are tired, sick, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
5. Do not operate the flame thrower if vegetation is dry or without adequate fire extinguisher capacity. The best time to torch is during or after a rain event. Avoid late afternoon torching or otherwise when conditions are dry or windy.
6. Carefully secure propane tanks during travel. Use appropriately designed pack frames to carry propane tanks. Check all equipment prior to use.
7. Keep children, unsafe adults, and pets away from the flame thrower.
8. Check connections of the hose to both the flame wand and propane tank to ensure there are no leaks. Disconnect hose from tank when finished.
9. Novice users should receive training or should experiment under controlled conditions until they are comfortable with all equipment and procedures.
10. Observe area after treatment to ensure there are no hot spots that could ignite.