

The point is that with all of us who are engaged in aerial protection of the forests, the more fires there are the greater the amount of money we receive. Our overtime pay is commensurate with the size of the disaster. Parachutists earn extra for jumps into fires, smoke-jumpers for descents, and aircrew for the number of hours logged in forest patrol flights. The rest of the time we are on salary.

In this situation, the end result - protecting the forests against fires - is not of particular concern to anyone. It is only by becoming bosses of one's own territory in the forest protection domain, by being paid for the end result, that we shall be able to achieve major economies since then, we shall not be interested in "this minute" earnings based on numbers of jumps and flying hours logged. Rather, we shall become more concerned with the long term, and will more competently perform preventive and environmental conservation work.

Furthermore, it is necessary to arrive at a valid determination of the true cost of protecting a hectare of forest from fires. The present 11 kopecks is a meaningless figure. It ought to be differentiated according to the local environmental and climatic conditions: the species composition of the forests, the average forest fire statistics for the aviation district, the climate, the terrain and so on.

It is high time to draw up a guideline on aerial protection of the forests under the new conditions of management. By abolishing the command method of administration and supporting initiative "from below", the territorial air bases must grant independence to the collectives of the air detachment, while at the same time ensuring that they are provided with traffic control, bookkeeping, operational and other services.