



APRIL suspends forest operation to fight Sumatra fires

JAKARTA MAR. 14 2014 – APRIL Indonesia today suspended forestry operations on an island off Sumatra, transferring 130 field staff to the fire lines to save its plantations. Asia's second-largest pulp and paper manufacturer said the extraordinary measures were necessary because dry conditions and high winds are spreading fires illegally set to clear land on Pulau Padang.



APRIL has deployed additional firefighters and equipment to combat blazes in Sumatra

“The fires are starting outside our forest concessions but with the heavy, circular winds, they’re jumping everywhere,” said Kusnan Rahmin, President Director of APRIL’s Indonesia operations. “If we can’t stop these fires, we will lose company assets.”

APRIL’s aggressive response reflects the growing urgency felt in Indonesia because of an early start to the annual fire season. Every year in dry season – usually June to October, illegal blazes are set as a cheap way to clear land for farming. Riau Province in Sumatra has already declared a state of emergency as smoke from the fires creates breathing hazards and grounds air traffic. There has been no rain in Pulau Padang for 60 days.

APRIL raises acacia trees on Sumatra for its pulp and paper mill in Riau. Though it strictly forbids burning, the company said that since January it has lost 400 hectares to illegal fires. The Pulau Padang blazes threaten two blocs of newly planted acacia.

Operations ranging from planting to harvesting have been halted on Pulau Padang, APRIL said. Forestry workers are being deployed to augment APRIL's regular 600-person firefighting force. Head office personnel and firefighters from other locations are being diverted to the island, as well. APRIL said 25 of its employees have joined civilian volunteers to combat fires in surrounding areas.

It's the second time this year the threat of fires from outside has shut down APRIL forest operations. In the other instance, APRIL forestry personnel mobilized to extinguish a blaze at the company's Pelalawan estate.

APRIL has taken a series of other emergency measures to address the Indonesian fire threat. They include:

- Adding 200 firefighters to its full-time force;
- Deploying 200 pumps and 30 pieces of heavy equipment to fire zones;
- Testing a high-discharge, 675-liter floating pump to combat fires near Sumatra's Kampar River;
- Contributing three helicopters and 30 pumps to government firefighting efforts;
- Providing online updates of the fire status in its concessions. Those updates are available on APRIL's corporate blog: www.aprildialog.com

About APRIL:

Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL) is a leading producer of fibre, pulp and paper with manufacturing operations in Kerinci, Riau Province, Indonesia. APRIL has been a pioneer in implementing sustainability practices in the pulp and paper industry in Indonesia.

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