

Safety

June 2009: Forest Fire Preparedness



BC Forest Safety Council
Unsafe is Unacceptable

ALERT

Fire season is here. Low snow packs and a build-up of fuel on the forest floor are contributing factors in what has already been a busy year for forest fires. Since April, provincial fire crews have responded to 335 fires, 96 per cent of which were caused by people.

A key component of all safety management systems is an emergency response plan that includes what to do and who to contact in case of a fire. To report a fire call 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on your cell phone. As a forestry operation, you have many responsibilities under the Wildfire Act and Regulations, some of which include:

Be aware: Check the fire hazard rating in your area and the risk rating of your work activity. Fire hazard ratings can change daily, so it is important to monitor the fire hazard rating in your area, and be aware of the requirements for your worksite.

Fire Danger Class	Restriction	Duration
DGR III (moderate)	After 3 consecutive days of DGR III or greater, maintain a fire watcher after work for a minimum of one hour	Until after the fire danger class falls below DGR III
DGR IV (high)	Maintain a fire watcher after work for a minimum of 2 hours	Until after the fire danger class falls below DGR III
	After 3 consecutive days of DGR IV, cease activity between 1 p.m. PDT (Pacific Daylight Saving Time) and sunset each day	Until after the fire danger class falls to DGR III for 2 consecutive days, or falls below DGR III
DGR V (extreme)	Cease activity between 1 p.m. PDT (Pacific Daylight Saving Time) and sunset each day and maintain a fire watcher after work for a minimum of 2 hours	Until after the fire danger class falls below DGR IV for 2 or more consecutive days
	After 3 consecutive days of DGR V, cease activity all day	Until after the danger class falls below DGR V for 3 or more consecutive days, or falls below DGR IV

Table 1 is taken from the *Wildfire Regulation*, Schedule 3 (Section 6 (3)).

For information on industrial activities that are high or low risk, and on appropriate types and quantities of tools and fire suppression systems to be available during industrial activities, download: **Guidelines for Fire Suppression Systems and Fire Fighting Hand Tools for British Columbia** from the Council's website.

Train your workers: The standard is the S-100 training or the S-100a refresher training. For a complete list of the qualified S-100 trainers in your area, visit recognized S-100 Basic Fire Suppression and Safety Instructors.

Test your equipment: It is recommended that you test your firefighting equipment each season. If you have mechanical equipment, ensure that it is operational. Back-pack pumps and hand tools should be inspected to ensure that they are in good repair and stored securely in vehicles.

Plan your escape routes: Fire behaviour has changed as a result of the increased fuel loading on the ground in areas impacted by the mountain pine beetle infestation. The speed and intensity of the fire may result in the primary escape route being blocked, so whenever possible plan a secondary escape route and discuss it with the crew. Have a man-check system in place to ensure the safety of all the workers.

2009 has the potential to be an active fire season, and worker safety is the priority. The keys to safety during fire season are planning, preparation and prevention.

For more information about fire preparedness contact the Ministry of Forests and Range Protection Branch at <http://www.bcwildfire.ca/> or call the information line at 1-888-336-7378.