

## FIRES DON'T PLAY FAVOURITES



**It doesn't matter where you live or who you are, fire knows no boundaries.** A lightning strike, a carelessly discarded cigarette, an abandoned campfire or a wind-driven backyard fire are just some of the ways fire can turn a rural area or a tranquil suburban subdivision into an inferno.

That's why wherever you live and work, it's important to practice fire safety around your home, neighbourhood, property and business and reduce the risk. It's also important to have insurance that covers fire damage.

This year, fire safety is particularly important in many areas of B.C. because of dry weather.

### **What can you do to reduce the risk of fire?**

- Start with a general yard cleanup. Remove needles, branches and underbrush that could fuel a fire. Get rid of brush, long grass and anything growing under large trees that could cause a fire to spread into those and neighbouring trees.
- Prune low-level branches up to at least 2.5 metres above the ground and keep your grass mowed.
- Move your woodpile and other flammable materials away from your house or other buildings. Flammable materials should be at least 10 metres away and uphill from your home.
- Replace bark mulch with gravel or decorative rocks.
- If your home or business is on a slope, pay particular attention to the downhill side of your property. Fire can race uphill and burn trees, brush, grass or other flammable materials.

### **What can you do to help fight a fire on your property?**

- Never put your life at risk when faced with a fire. Call the fire department immediately if it is a serious blaze.
- For less serious fires, keep a hose and nozzle permanently connected and clearly visible. Make sure you have enough hose to reach the roof and all exterior walls.

- If water pressure is a concern, keep a full barrel of water and a 10-litre pail nearby.
- Have a shovel or grubbing tool available to use to prevent a ground fire from spreading.
- Check roads and driveways to ensure easy access for all vehicles, including emergency vehicles.
- Review and practice fire safety procedures with your family and employees, including evacuation of your home or business. Make sure everyone knows where firefighting equipment — including a ladder — is located, and be sure to have emergency numbers clearly posted.

### **What about outdoor activities - are there steps to take to be safer?**

- Obey all restrictions about fires, whether it's a ban on campfires or another type of local burning restriction.
- Never leave a fire unattended, and be sure the fire is completely out before leaving the area.
- Don't try to get close to a wildfire to watch; stay away so emergency responders can do their job and work toward containing the fire.

### **What about neighbours?**

- Working together with neighbours is essential. Get together and talk about a fire protection plan for your area, and schedule a neighbourhood clean-up event.

### **What extra precautions can you take while building in a forested area?**

- Fire-safe building materials are an important part of protecting homes and businesses. For example, wood siding and shake roofs are popular, but they leave buildings vulnerable to fire. There are building products that will give your home or business a rustic look while helping to protect it from fire. Consider some of the new metal shingles that look like asphalt, as well as the cement siding products that look like wood. Refer to B.C. Forest Service publications or consult a building supply store for more information.

### **Is there anything else to do to be prepared for fire?**

- Check your insurance policy now to ensure it adequately covers all belongings, property and buildings against fire damage whether the fire starts with the structure or from the surrounding forest. As fire insurance is reasonably and readily available in B.C., provincial disaster financial assistance does not apply to fire damage.
- Make an inventory or video of all your belongings and keep it in a fireproof container with other important documents.

## Further Information:



For further information on fire protection, contact a B.C. Forest Service fire centre or zone office in the Blue Pages of your phone book or contact B.C. Forest Service Protection Program Headquarters, 2nd floor, 2957 Jutland Rd., Victoria BC, V8W 9C1  
Phone: 250-387-5965 Fax: 250-387-5685.

### **Web sites:**

<http://www.bcwildfire.ca/> also has information on things you can do to be safer.

<http://www.pep.bc.ca/> has information about emergency preparedness.

To report a wildfire, call:

Toll-free 1-800-663-5555 or \*5555 on most cellular networks.