

# NEWS RELEASE



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August 24, 2005  
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## **ABC FP Makes Recommendations to Mitigate Fire Risk in BC**

The Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABC FP) has released a position paper on forest fires in BC. The paper examines the historical reasons for the increased frequency of catastrophic fires such as those experienced in the summer of 2003 and offers the provincial government 13 recommendations on ways to reduce the fire risk in the province.

The association states that the current emphasis on fire suppression combined with better fire fighting techniques have changed the province's forest ecosystems. Fires prevent a build up of debris on the forest floor and kill pests such as mountain pine beetle and dwarf mistletoe. Without relatively frequent, low intensity fires (every five to 15 years), debris builds up, increasing the potential for catastrophic fires.

"Fire management practices of recent decades have changed BC's forest ecology," says ABC FP President Randy Trerise. "The emphasis on fire suppression has increased the amount of available fuel sources and changed the biology of some forests. From a fire risk standpoint, we are leaving our forests and our communities open to the potential for more severe fire damage than has ever been experienced before."

With the proliferation of dry materials and dead and dying vegetation from pest attacks, fires are more likely to start and are more likely to spread quickly, bringing devastation like that seen during the fires of 2003.

Some of the recommendations made by the ABC FP include changing land use policies to ensure there is a link between land use and fire management. The ABC FP also recommends moderation of provincial forest management policies that inadvertently add to the fire risk. These policies include reforestation standards which favour closely planted areas over more natural wide spacings and the retention of woody debris, which in some situations can add to a fuel build up problem.

Other recommendations call for an increase in public education about fire and fuel management. "Public education is key," says Mr. Trerise. "We must help British Columbians understand the links between fuel reduction, risk reduction, protection of human health, safety and smoke management." For example, while prescribed burns may produce smoke that temporarily reduces air quality, the smoke from a large, uncontrolled fire, is many times worse and can turn into a more serious public safety issue when a fire occurs near a community.

The full paper and an executive summary are available on the association's website at: [www.abcfp.ca](http://www.abcfp.ca). The ABC FP would like to thank Bruce Blackwell, Registered Professional Forester (RPF), for writing the first draft and Patrick Daigle, RPF, Mike Feller, PhD, Greg Anderson, Rocky Mountain Forest District, and Steve Schmidt, RPF, for reviewing the paper.