

# BCWS Fuel Management

## FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT AND ABATEMENT (FHAA) Q+A

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fuels left on the land base following Industrial activities (ex. Logging) and **'prescribed activities'**[1] can contribute to potential wildfire threats. FHAA activities are important tools to reduce the fire hazard potential of these fuels. Under the Wildfire Act, a person carrying out an industrial activity or prescribed activity is required to assess and abate potential fire hazards related to those activities.

The objective of provincial legislation is to ensure that fire hazards are identified and abated in an appropriate manner and within an appropriate timeframe, to help decrease potential fire behaviour and reduce the level of suppression response required if a fire starts. It is particularly important to ensure that fires do not threaten values at risk, including:

- communities (specifically human life and property)
- critical infrastructure such as transmission lines
- community watersheds, and major highway travel corridors
- critical wildlife habitat
- and any unique values as identified.

Accordingly, FHAA efforts need to thoroughly identify consequence based on the proximity of values at risk to a specific activity and the associated risk of a fire starting or spreading. A Guide to Fuel Hazard Assessment and Abatement in British Columbia ('the guide') provides a default FHAA process for forest professionals and/or **'qualified holders'**[2]. The guide

includes non-legislated guidance for completing a fire hazard assessment and offers quantifiable targets for determining hazard abatement need.

The results-based framework of the Wildfire Act and Regulation allows for professional reliance options. Under this framework, a separate assessment and abatement requirements category exists for qualified holders. In addition to professional reliance, these provisions recognize:

- specific, localized circumstances; and the
- dynamic fuel loading and fire hazard conditions related to a qualified holder's different operational phases.

Alternative[3] professionally designed procedures, strategies, and prescriptions must include a professional rationale and meet the objectives set in legislation. All results and strategies may be subject to inspection, investigation and enforcement by Compliance and Enforcement (C&E). Prescribed FHAA circumstances and intervals by category or persons (i.e. general population, qualified holder and fibre recovery agreement holder) are defined in the Wildfire Regulation sections 11 and 12.

### TERMS/NOTES

1. Section 11(1) of the Wildfire Regulation defines **'prescribed activities'** as operating a waste disposal site, a dry land sort, a camp associated with an industrial activity, or an industrial activity that is likely to create or increase a fire hazard.

2. A **'qualified holder'** is either a party to a cost-sharing agreement, or is the holder of an agreement or licence referred to in section 12 (1) (a), (c), (d), (e), (e.1) and (g) and (2) (a) of the Forest Act, and has paid annual rent under the Annual Rent Regulation.

3. Procedures, strategies, and prescriptions that, as specified by a forest professional, deviate from the assessment intervals and abatement timing, extent, and thresholds detailed in legislation and 'the guide'.



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# FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT AND ABATEMENT (FHAA) Q+A

## WHAT IS FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT AND ABATEMENT?

- **Fire hazard assessment** is the analysis of the ignition potential and predictable fire behaviour based on fuel hazards (i.e. physical fuel characteristics) and site-specific and probable weather conditions. Assessments consider the risk of a fire starting (i.e. lightning and potential for human caused ignitions) or spreading, the difficulty of controlling the fire, and potential impacts on identified values.
- **Fire hazard abatement** includes activities carried out to reduce ignition potential or fire behaviour by reducing the fuel hazard after an industrial activity or prescribed activity has occurred.
- **Fire hazard abatement methods** may include physical removal of fuel from the site; utilization: chipping and/or mulching (where it does not contradict other statutory and/or contractual obligations); piling and burning; and broadcast burning.

Additional management methods for reducing ignition potential include:

- Access control; and
- Signage

## WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO CONDUCT FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT AND ABATEMENT ACTIVITIES?

- **Fulfilling statutory obligations:** Fire hazard assessment and abatement are required by law.
- **Reducing wildfire risk:** It is essential to carry out assessment and abatement activities to reduce wildfire risks – not only for harvested areas, but also for nearby interface areas, infrastructure, and other values that could be at risk.
- **Demonstrating due diligence:** Assessing fire hazard is a critical step in demonstrating whether people conducting prescribed and industrial activities have exercised due diligence. Under Section 29(a) of the Wildfire Act, a person may not be found to have contravened the act if it can be demonstrated that he or she exercised due diligence to prevent the contravention.
- **Determining risk and treatment need:** A fire hazard assessment is important for determining if the amount of residual fuels from prescribed and industrial activities exceed established threshold values (as defined in 'the guide' or in an alternative professionally designed procedure, strategy, or prescription) and could lead to increased fire risk or problematic fire behaviour.
- **Improving wildfire suppression success:** Unabated fire and fuel hazards can lead to problematic fire behaviour and pose significant challenges to wildfire control efforts. Fuel management can have a positive effect on fuel characteristics and as a result, will mitigate the risks and minimize wildfire suppression costs and losses.

## WHO CAN CONDUCT WILDFIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT AND ABATEMENT ACTIVITIES?

- **Forestry professionals:** Fire hazard assessments and fire hazard abatement strategy and prescription development fall under the scope of practice of a forest professional, as defined in the Foresters Act and preserved under the [Professional Governance Act](#).
  - As defined in Forest Professionals BC (FPBC) [Bylaw 9](#): Standards of Ethical and Professional Conduct, forest professionals who conduct fire hazard assessments must ensure they are competent and working within their scope of practice.
- **Designated officials:** An official (as defined in the Wildfire Act Section 1) who is operating within his or her scope of practice, as demonstrated by extensive experience and applicable training, may also carry out fire hazard assessments.

# FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT AND ABATEMENT (FHAA) Q+A

## WHEN ARE FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED?

- A fire hazard assessment is required when carrying out an industrial activity such as land clearing or another prescribed activity that is likely to create or increase a fire hazard within one kilometre of forest or grassland (Wildfire Act Section 7).
- A fire hazard assessment is also required when an official (as defined in the Wildfire Act) notifies a person carrying out an industrial or prescribed activity that a fire hazard exists, as outlined in Section 11(1)(b)(ii) of the Wildfire Regulation.

## HOW OFTEN MUST FIRE HAZARDS BE ASSESSED?

### General

- During the active operation of an industrial or prescribed activity described in section 11(1) of the Wildfire Regulation fire hazards must be assessed:
  - **Every 3 months** if the activity is inside or within two kilometres of a local government area or a regional district fire protection district (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(2a)).
  - **Every 6 months** for all other areas (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(3)).
- If operations are going to be inactive for more than three months in the applicable areas mentioned above or more than six months in the applicable areas also mentioned above, a fire hazard assessment must be completed upon ceasing those operations.

### Qualified Holders:

- A qualified holder may vary from these requirements to conduct fire hazard assessments at prescribed intervals specified by a forest professional (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(3.1)).
- Practicing forest professionals must conduct themselves in accordance with FPBC Bylaws.

## WHAT MUST BE INCLUDED IN A FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT?

- A fire hazard assessment must include an assessment of the **'fuel hazard'**[4] and the associated risk of a fire starting or spreading (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(4)).
- A fire hazard assessment should also include an assessment of consequence based on the proximity of values at risk to a specific activity and the associated risk of a fire starting or spreading.

### TERMS

4. **'Fuel hazard'** means the potential fire behaviour, without regard to the state of weather or topography, based on the physical fuel characteristics, including fuel arrangement, fuel load, condition of herbaceous vegetation and the presence of ladder fuel (Wildfire Regulation Section 1)

## TO LEARN MORE

### LINKS

[Wildfire hazard assessment and abatement - Province of British Columbia](#)

### REPORTING

**To report a fire hazard and abatement concern or potential contravention of the Wildfire Act or Wildfire Regulation, visit one of the following webpages:**

- BC Wildfire Service ([contacts](#))
- [Natural Resource Violation reporting](#)
- Alternatively, an individual can report concerns in person to a local BC Wildfire Service fire zone office or to the local natural resource district office.



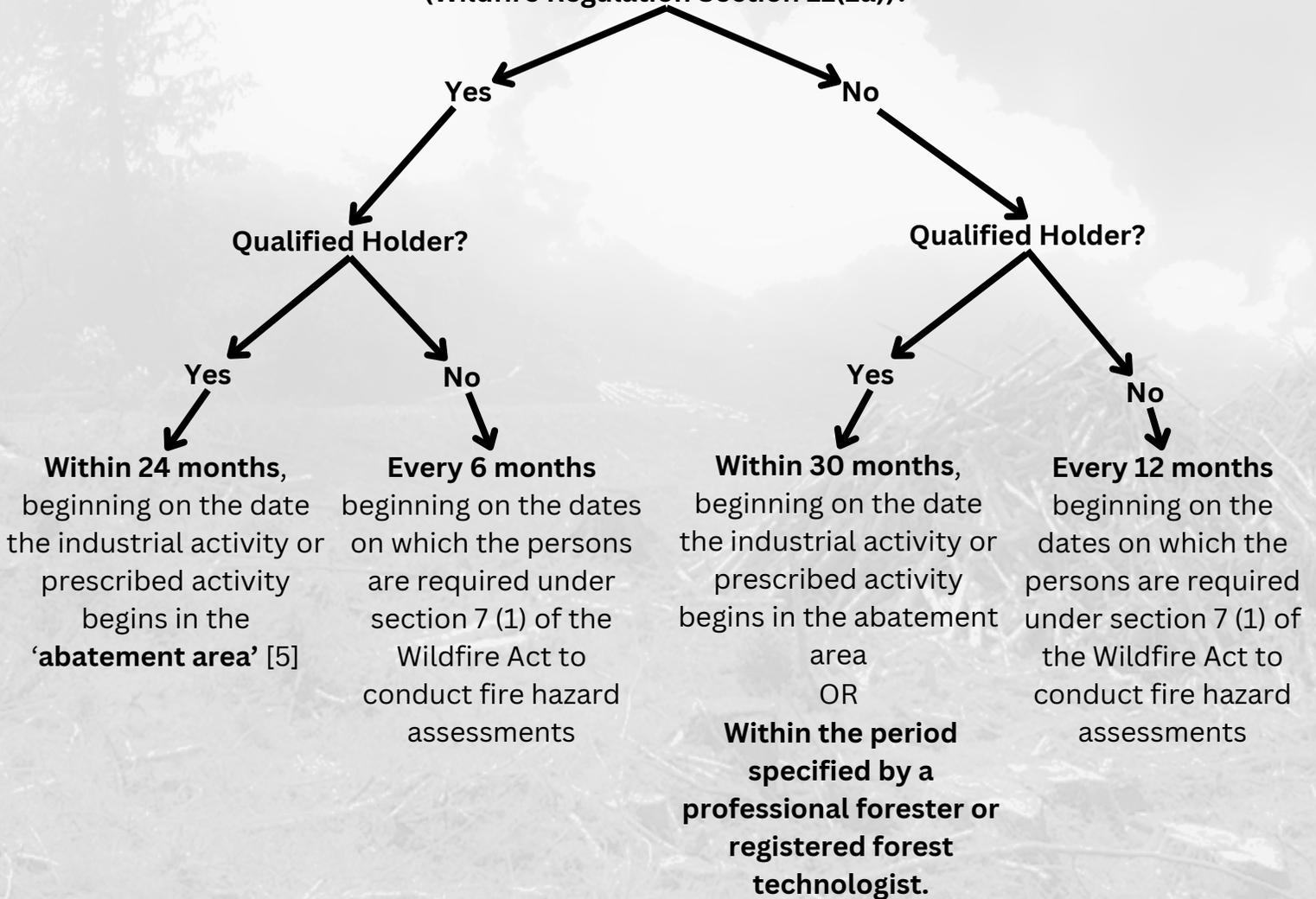
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# FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT TIMING DICHOTOMOUS KEY

## WHEN MUST FIRE ABATEMENT ACTIVITIES BE COMPLETED?

Is the activity inside or within two kilometres of a local government area or a regional district fire protection district (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(2a))?



- A person required to abate a fire hazard under section 7 of the Wildfire Act must reduce the fuel hazard on the site of the industrial activity or prescribed activity as necessary to ensure that carrying out the activity:
  - does not increase the risk of a fire starting on the site, and
  - if a fire were to start, would not increase the fire behaviour or fire suppression associated with the fire, or
  - *if the person is a qualified holder:* as specified by a professional forester or registered forest technologist

### TERMS

A **'qualified holder'** is either a party to a cost-sharing agreement, or is the holder of an agreement or licence referred to in section 12 (1) (a), (c), (d), (e), (e.1) and (g) and (2) (a) of the Forest Act, and has paid annual rent under the Annual Rent Regulation.

5. **'Abatement area'** means each area within which the industrial activity or prescribed activity takes place in each consecutive 12 month period that occurs after the date the activity begins.



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