Ministry of Forests,

File: 19400-00

Advisory Bulletin No.2025/07/30– "Timber Sale License - Fire Hazard Assessment and Abatement"

This advisory bulletin is intended to outline expectations for BCTS Timber Sale Licence (TSL) holders regarding fire hazard assessment (FHA) and abatement requirements contained in BC Wildfire legislation and regulations and BCTS agreements. The *Wildfire Act* requires a person who is carrying out high risk industrial activities within a cut block, for example harvesting, to assess and abate fire hazards, Wildfire Regulation Section 11 & 12.

WHAT IS A FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT?

Assessing fire hazard is analysing the ignition potential and predictable fire behaviour based on fuel hazards (i.e. physical fuel characteristics) and site-specific and probable weather conditions. It includes a consideration of the risk of a fire starting or spreading, the difficulty of controlling the fire, and potential impacts on identified values (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(4)).

The method of fire hazard assessment is at discretion of forest professional; here are some recommended methods.

- BC Timber Sales FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT GUIDE and FORM or CLICK ON SPECIFIC BUSINESS AREA TAB
- BC Wildfire Service CLICK HERE TO FIND GUIDE AND OTHER RESOURCES

WHEN IS A FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

A fire hazard assessment is required when carrying out an industrial activity such as land clearing or other prescribed activity that is likely to create or increase a fire hazard within one kilometer of forest or grassland *(Wildfire Act* section.7*)*, or when an official notifies a person carrying out an industrial activity that a fire hazard exists (Wildfire Regulation 11(1) (b) (ii)). An industrial activity is defined in Section 1 of the *Wildfire Act*. In accordance with the Wildfire Regulation Section 11 (3.1) a qualified holder must carry out a fire hazard assessment at the following prescribed intervals after the start of industrial activities;

- ✓ **3 months** intervals during the period in which the persons carrying on the industrial activity, if the activity is inside or within two kilometers of a local government area or a regional district fire protection district (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(2(a)).
- ✓ **6 months** intervals during the period in which the persons carrying on the industrial activity, for all other areas (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(3)).
- ✓ Or as specified by a professional forester or a registered forest technologist (Wildfire Regulation Section 11(3.1(b)).

If operations are going to be inactive for more than 3 or 6 months as applicable, a fire hazard assessment is required prior to shut down.

WHAT IS FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT?

Fire hazard abatement includes activities carried out to reduce the ignition potential and the fire behaviour by reducing the fuel hazard as a result of industrial activities. Qualified holders must reduce the fire hazard on the site of industrial activity as necessary to ensure that it does not increase the risk of a fire starting and if a fire did start it would not increase the fire behaviour or fire suppression activity. The qualified holder must engage a forest professional to incorporate into a strategy, procedure or hazard assessment the levels of fuel abatement or other measures necessary to reduce the fire hazard.

Fire hazard assessment and abatement plans must be considered prior to commencement of industrial activities options may include burning, non-burning activities or a combination of reducing fuel loading, rearranging fuel, removing ignition sources, creating fuel breaks and limiting access. In general, all roadside and landing piles should be abated.

In accordance with Section 12.1 Wildfire Regulation abatement period begins from the date of commencement industrial activity (for example harvesting).

- 24 months for interface, an area inside, or within 2km of , the boundaries of;
    i. A fire protection district in a regional district.
    ii. an improvement district.
    iii. a water improvement district.
    iv. a prescribed organization
- 30 months for non-interface, or as specified by a forest professional for non-interface areas.

WHO CAN CARRY OUT FIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENTS AND PRESCRIBE ABATEMENT STRATEGIES?

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.

TSL holders are defined as a 'qualified holder' under the Forest Act. Wildfire Regulation section 11 (3.1) identifies qualified holder's fire hazard assessment expectations.

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) Fire Hazard Assessment and Abatement Q&A Bulletin provides guidance to qualified holders and professional reliance when conducting fire hazard assessment and abatement activities.

FOREST PROFESSIONALS

Forest professionals are responsible for prescribing work to be carried out to mitigate the fire risk to the client. Forest professional must ensure they are competent to prescribe the required work and comply with all legislation, including Forest Professionals of BC (FPBC) bylaws and policies. Because knowledge and experience can vary from client to client, forest professionals must ensure they have the necessary information to undertake the service.

Forest professionals practising in fire and fuel management need to have in-depth understanding of the following components of fire and fuel management:

- ✓ An understanding of fire and fuels management goals and objectives,
- ✓ Understanding wildfire suppression principles in BC,
- ✓ Understanding of wildfire behaviour principles,
- ✓ Ability to appropriately assess wildfire and fuel hazards, and
- ✓ Familiarity with BC ecosystems

For additional information on forest professional refer to the Association of BC Forest Professionals website Professional Forestry Explained (fpbc.ca)

WHAT ARE TSL HOLDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

- ✓ **Be familiar** with the potential fire hazard risk for your applicable operating area. CLICK HEREto refer to BC Fire Hazard Assessment and Abatement Risk Map
- ✓ **Engage support from forest professionals** when conducting fire hazard assessments and prescribing abatement measures.
- ✓ **Complete Fire Hazard Assessments** at prescribed intervals.
- ✓ **Document and retain records** results of all assessment and abatement activities.
- ✓ **Provide copies** of all completed fire hazard assessment(s) to BCTS.
- ✓ **Conduct abatement activities** as identified by assessment results or as required in accordance with the *Wildfire Act* and Regulations. Refer to BC Wildfire Services Best Management Practices for Industrial Woody Debris Management in BC
- ✓ If burning is part of the plan for abatement:
    - Ensure required notification is made and approvals received from BC Wildfire Service
      (Burn Registration Line 1-888-797-1717),
    - **Ensure open burning requirements/restrictions are followed.** Refer to the Industrial and Resource Management Burning Category 3 Guide: CLICK HERE FOR GUIDE
      and venting index https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-pollution/smoke-burning/ventilation-indexTake necessary steps to **ensure open burning activities are extinguished** (e.g. scanning).

Receipt of hazard assessments and completion of abatement activities is associated to BCTS deposit release procedures.

Be advised that under Section 79 of the Forest Act a holder of a timber sale licence will have a continuing liability to perform obligations.

For further information about fire hazard assessment and abatement, refer to the following:

- ✓ BC Wildfire Service "Fire Hazard Assessment and Abatement Q&A" https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/wildfire-status/prevention/fire-fuel-management/hazard-assessment-abatement/faq_wildfire_hazard_assessment_and_abatement_2024.pdf
- ✓ Forest Practice Board "Board Bulletin, Volume 18, Fire Hazard Assessment" https://www.bcfpb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Volume-18-Fire-Hazard-Assessment.pdf
- ✓ BC Wildfire Service Industry Website https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/for-industry-commercial-operators