



POLICY SUBJECT		
Post-Wildfire Natural Hazards Risk Analysis		
EFFECTIVE DATE	RESPONSIBLE BRANCH	NUMBER
July 16 2012	Wildfire Management Branch	9.7
APPROVED DATE		

## Background

British Columbia periodically experiences severe wildfires near urban or other populated areas, such as those that occurred in the summers of 1998, 2003, 2007 and 2009. Severe wildfires damage the forest canopy and the plants below, as well as the soil surface. This can result in increased runoff after intense rainfall, or rapid snowmelt, which can put homes and other structures downslope of a burned area at risk of localized floods and landslides.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) and the Ministry of Justice Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) recognize that the occurrence of post-wildfire natural hazard events can potentially result in threats to public safety, and/or damage to buildings and infrastructure within or beyond the wildfire boundary.

## Scope

This policy:

- provides a framework for MFLNRO to identify and assess increased natural hazards created by wildfires and associated risks to public safety, buildings and infrastructure.
- identifies the major roles and responsibilities of MFLNRO and EMBC in communicating these hazards and risks to the public, communities and affected stakeholders;
- is incremental, distinct, and separate from the legislated requirement for BC Wildfire Management under Sections 6 and 9 of the *Wildfire Act* and Sections 16 and 17 of the *Wildfire Regulation*, to rehabilitate damage related to fire suppression and control activities;
- defines an expanded role for MFLNRO to identify post-wildfire natural hazards within an area burned by wildfire and immediate risks to buildings and infrastructure within or beyond the burned area rather than just the portion of land affected by fire suppression and control activities;
- does not apply to post-wildfire natural hazard risk mitigation treatments on lands that are the responsibility of other jurisdictions or private land owners.

## Policy

It is MFLNRO policy that:

1. MFLNRO will identify and assess post-wildfire natural hazards and immediate risks to public safety, buildings and infrastructure. It will share the results of this risk analysis with EMBC and other affected government ministries and agencies such as the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. MFLNRO and EMBC will cooperatively communicate hazards and risks to the public, communities and stakeholders as described in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MFLNRO and EMBC.
2. MFLNRO, on behalf of the Province, will act as the lead agency with the primary responsibility to:
  - a. monitor and screen wildfire incidents to identify those wildfires of concern that will require further investigation;
  - b. complete a risk analysis identifying post-wildfire natural hazards and risks to public safety, buildings and infrastructure;
  - c. notify EMBC of increased hazards and immediate risk levels created by the wildfires that pose an imminent threat to public safety, buildings or infrastructure;
  - d. prepare a separate Risk Mitigation Options Report if applicable;
  - e. evaluate the risks identified in the risk analysis, in consultation with EMBC and/or affected stakeholders, to determine whether the risks are acceptable and, if not, whether they can be mitigated; and
  - f. where risk mitigation treatments are considered practical and beneficial, within or beyond the wildfire boundary, work with EMBC and/or local authorities and stakeholders to implement treatments.
3. MFLNRO will provide resources and funds for wildfire screening and risk analysis, through the Direct Fire Statutory Appropriation Vote.

The MFLNRO document, “Standard Operating Procedure for Post-Wildfire Natural Hazards Risk Analysis” (SOP), will be used to guide MFLNRO’s identification, analysis and evaluation of the risk of post-wildfire natural hazards, and application of risk mitigation treatments, to ensure a systematic and consistent approach to risk management and communication.

A post-wildfire risk analysis is not intended to address (1) reforestation or enhancements to site productivity for the purpose of growing merchantable timber, (2) repairs to or replacement of range improvements, or (3) mitigation of

damage to forest, range or aquatic habitats for those areas on crown land affected by wildfire.

## **MFLNRO Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Director, BC Wildfire Management**

The Director, BC Wildfire Management, or designate, will review and provide final approval of Post-Wildfire Natural Hazard Risk Analyses, including the development of risk mitigation options. The Director may also confer with JAG and/or stakeholders to evaluate risk and risk control options and plans to approve mitigation options and determine appropriate government or stakeholder funding sources.

### **Fire Centre Manager**

The Fire Centre Manager or designate approves funding and expenditures to (1) monitor wildfire incidents and conduct the initial screening process and (2) complete a risk analysis as necessary. The Fire Centre Manager may approve cost limited risk mitigation treatments as identified in mitigation plans through approval of a FS129 Schedule B, if the work can be done with on-site resources. This includes an evaluation of proposed treatment options, costs, rationale and likelihood of treatment success.

### **Regional Executive Director**

The Regional Executive Director (RED) or designate is responsible to ensure that adequate resources are provided so that MFLNRO can accomplish its operational roles and responsibilities as detailed in the SOP. This will involve communication and collaboration across business lines and programs to ensure provision of both MFLNRO staff resources and funding from operating budgets to cover the maintenance of in-house staff expertise, and associated administrative expenses that are not specifically covered by the Direct Fire Statutory Appropriation Vote budget.

### **District Manager**

The District Manager or designate, reviews and approves proposals for risk mitigation treatments based on collective advice of the BC Wildfire Management staff, and specialists such as earth scientists and engineers. This includes an evaluation of proposed treatment options, costs, rationale and treatment success.

### **Specialists**

MFLNRO specialists provide technical expertise and professional services to monitor and screen wildfire incidents, complete the Post-Wildfire Natural Hazards Risk Analyses and propose risk mitigation options where required. In periods of high demand for such specialized services, the Ministry may retain external consultants to complete the risk analysis and/or prepare a risk mitigation options report.

## **EMBC Roles and Responsibilities**

The EMBC roles and responsibilities are described in the MOU between MFLNRO and Ministry of Justice. The MOU clarifies the responsibilities and interaction between MFLNRO and EMBC to ensure clear communication to the public of the risks from natural hazards following severe wildfires.

## References

- [Wildfire Act](#);
- [Wildfire Regulation](#);
- Wildfire Management Program Rehabilitation Standard Operating Guidelines
- Standard Operating Procedure for “Post-Wildfire Natural Hazards Risk Analysis”;
- Memorandum of Understanding between MFLNRO and JAG.