

June 5, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range  
Protection Program

## Overview

The Forest Service is committed to keeping the public informed about wildfire activity in the province. When a fire spreads quickly and threatens a community, it is critical that the public has access to current information about the fire and suppression activities.

News media serving B.C. communities provide essential information to help keep the public informed and safe. Our objective through the fire season is to establish and maintain lines of communication to the public through the provision of timely information to the media.

By informing media of agreed-upon safety regulations prior to fire season and on a fire site, we hope to ensure that the media's access to a fire site is both efficient and safe.

## B.C. Forest Service Responsibilities

Based on WorkSafe BC standards, we will provide the following to protect the safety of media visiting a fire site:

1. Information on potential hazards, provided at the fire site;
2. Guidelines for safe work practices while on site at a fire (including proper attire, supervision, and awareness of hazards), provided at the beginning of a fire season and/or at the fire site;
3. Contact information for WorkSafe BC and/or Labour Canada;
4. One or more designated Forest Service representatives to brief media regarding safety regulations and situational hazards on site;
5. One or more designated Forest Service representatives to supervise and guide media on the fireline, in order that they do not affect the fire suppression duties of Forest Service personnel;
6. Where applicable, proper safety equipment and clothing (hard hat, Nomex fire-resistant clothing, goggles, etc.).

## Media Responsibilities

Members of the Press are responsible for adhering to health and safety regulations prescribed by the Forest Service while they are working at a fire. Media must respect the following rules:

1. The Provincial Information Officer or a Fire Centre Information Officer must be notified that the media would like to visit a work site prior to their arrival;
2. The media must wear suitable clothing on the site (appropriate footwear, clothing to fully protect arms and legs, provided hard hat, and other safety equipment as deemed necessary);
3. A supervisor from the visiting media outlet must be designated to brief workers on safety regulations and ensure that they comply with these rules;
4. Media must adhere to written safety guidelines provided to them, as well as any safety briefing guidelines provided by a Forest Service representative on site;
5. In order to gain flight access to a restricted area, media must contact a Fire Centre Information Officer, who will then consult the Fire Control Officer on duty;
6. Media must also check for a NOTAM before flying over a restricted area.

**Media Violations**

If media choose not to contact the Forest Service prior to their arrival at a fire and we are unaware of their presence, we cannot be held responsible if they do not respect health and safety regulations.

If media fail to comply with the above rules, the following steps can be taken:

1. The appointed supervisor has the authority and the responsibility to correct unsafe acts;
2. In the event that this representative's instructions are disregarded, the Incident Commander has the authority to instruct the violator(s) to leave the site;
3. Continual violators may be reported to WorkSafe BC or Labour Canada for further follow-up.

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