

SOG Best Practices on Burning of Planting Boxes

The Strait of Georgia Business Area with assistance from Wildfire Management Branch - Quinsam Fire Base has developed the following Guidance for Burning of Planting Boxes.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to provide information and policy guidance to contractors and district staff around the decision making process for determining whether or not to burn (seedling storage boxes) in the field.

This document provides clarification of requirements under applicable legislation (*Wildfire Act* and *Regulations*) and identifies considerations and options for burning. It is important that we ensure contractors are aware of their potential obligations, and are diligent in preventing fires.

This guidance is not intended to provide legal advice as to the application of legislation.

Background

Applicable Legislation

Wildfire Act and Wildfire Regulations

The *Wildfire Act* and the *Wildfire Regulations* clearly define the obligations of a person who uses open fire and/ or who starts a wildfire while carrying out an Industrial Activity.

The *Wildfire Act* and *Regulations* are available online at www.bcwildfire.ca

Sections of note:

Wildfire Act

Part 1- Forest and Range Protection Requirements

Wildfire Regulations:

Part 1 - Definitions

Part 2 - Fire Prevention, Division 1 – Precautions

Part 3 – Fire Control

Part 4 – Permissible Open Fires

Schedules 1-3

Tree planting is an Industrial Activity. While tree planting itself may not be a High Risk activity, the use of open fire is (and this includes burning seedling storage boxes).

Prior to burning, you will need to know the requirements for Open Fire Use and High Risk Industrial Activities. While burning you will be required to ensure that you are in compliance with the *Wildfire Act* and *Regulations*.

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The burning of seedling storage boxes may fall into one of two Open Fire Categories.

A Category 1 Open Fire is defined as an open fire that burns piled material no larger than 1m in height and 1m in diameter and includes a campfire that burns such material.

A Category 2 Open Fire is defined as, an open fire that:

- (a) burns material in one pile not exceeding 2 m in height and 3 m in width,
- (b) burns material concurrently in 2 piles each not exceeding 2 m in height and 3m in width, or
- (c) burns stubble or grass over an area that does not exceed 0.2 ha;

***As seedling storage boxes are coated in wax and are highly flammable it is recommended that when burning them you use a small fire and feed additional boxes on the fire as required.**

Factors to consider when deciding to burn planting boxes

A) Are there other options for disposing of the seedling storage boxes?

- Can they be removed from site and be disposed at a suitable disposal site? (i.e.: local dump, nurseries etc.)
- Can they be buried onsite so they are not to be readily visible?
- Can they be flattened and placed in a slash pile that is scheduled to be burnt at a later date? (this will require prior approval from a Forest Official)
- Can the boxes be burnt safely onsite? Burning should be the last option.

B) If you decide that burning is the appropriate option, then you should consider the following: (if one or more of the answers is No, then you should reconsider your choice to burn).

- Is the use of open fire not restricted? (Category 1, 2 and 3 fire use is often restricted during the summer months, or times of high fire danger.)
- Is it safe to burn and is it likely to continue to be safe? This should be based on current and forecasted local weather (winds, temp, RH etc), the Fire Danger Class rating for the applicable area, and your proposed burn location.
- Is there a safe burn location? (ie: a ballasted road, gravel pit etc).
- Have adjacent fuel hazards been assessed to determine the risk of the fire escaping? (Spotting and spreading into adjacent slash piles, standing timber, fine fuels etc). Make sure to consider the effects of aspect, terrain and potential onsite winds.
- Is there a fuel break around your proposed burn location?
- Do you have the appropriate resources on site? (Firefighting hand tools, water delivery systems, staff etc.)

Recommended Preventive Actions for Escape Fires from Open Fire Use

(Burning Boxes)

A) Prior to burning:

Information gathering:

- Confirm that open fire use is not restricted. This information can be confirmed by calling a forest official, or checking online.
- Confirm the Fire Danger Rating for your representative area. Industrial operators are responsible to ensure they are using weather data that represents their location.
- Confirm the restriction on High Risk Activities. (fire watch requirements, early shift etc.)
- Check the onsite wind. Do not burn if the winds are strong enough to carry a firebrand (spark) into other combustible materials.
- Check the area for water sources. Ensure that patrol staff are aware of their locations.

Safe burn location:

- Ensure that it is safe to burn, and that it will continue to be safe. (ie: weather forecast, winds, temperature, RH (relative humidity) etc.)
- Check the winds on site, do not burn if the wind is strong enough to carry firebrands (sparks) into other combustible material.
- Ensure that a fuel break has been established around the pile(s). Recommend 2-3m (at a minimum) from adjacent combustible materials.
- Assess adjacent fuel hazard to ensure there is no chance that a fire may spread. (Firebrands can spot into the slash, debris piles, standing timber). Firebrands (ash) from wax boxes can travel a significant distance with the wind.

B) While Burning:

- Prior to igniting the fire ensure you have enough time in the day to meet your patrol requirements. This may require you to be on site for up to 2 hours after burning.
- Do not light more piles than can be effectively patrolled by the personnel onsite. One fire location is easier to patrol than numerous; a small fire is less likely to spread through firebrands than a larger one.
- Ensure that you have resources onsite; this may include: hand tools, water delivery system, communications tools, watch/patrol personnel.
- Ensure the fuel break is maintained. Do not leave the fire unattended.
- Patrol the burn site and the adjacent area to ensure that the fire has not spread or spotted into adjacent fuels. (ie: the block, slash piles, fine fuels such as grass or salal, standing timber).
- Ensure that all fires are out prior to leaving. Douse the fire location with water or dirt. Coldtrail the fire location with your bare hand and ensure the fire is completely out!

If the Fire Spreads Beyond the Burn Area or Becomes Out of Control

You must carry out fire control immediately. This may require you to make available:

- All resources onsite, and
- 1 piece of heavy equipment, 1 fire suppression system, and 6 workers who are equipped with at least 1 fire fighting tool, and
- (if fire started on crown land) all workers who are working within 30 km by road of the industrial activity, and
- Fire suppression systems located within 30km by road of the industrial activity, and
- Heavy equipment located within 30km by road of the industrial activity.

As soon as practical report the fire :

- To an official employed by the ministry
- To a peace officer, or
- By calling a fire emergency response telephone number.

*** If your fire spreads beyond the intended burn area or otherwise becomes out of control it is a contravention of the Wildfire Act.**

*** A contravention of the Wildfire Act is an offence. A contravention of the Wildfire Act may result in enforcement actions being pursued by the government.**

Reference Information:

Telephone Numbers:

BCTS Strait of Georgia	250 286-9300
Fire Reporting Number	1 800-663-5555 or *5555 on a cell phone
Quinsam Fire Base	250 286-7560
Coastal Fire Centre (general)	250 951-4222

Website:

MFR Wildfire Management	www.bcwildfire.ca
BC MOE	www.env.gov.bc.ca

Published Materials: Ministry of Forest & Range “A Guide to Category 2 Open Fires”
Wildfire Act
Wildfire Regulations