

HOW WE FIGHT FIRES



On average, **every year in British Columbia we have more than 2,000 wildfires**. Over 92 percent of these fires are extinguished at a size of less than four hectares and are therefore regarded as a successful initial attack.

The secret to keeping the vast majority of fires small is evident in our motto: Hit Hard, Hit Fast. Fire fighters have the best opportunity to suppress wildfires when they are discovered and reported during the earliest and most controllable stages. Through early detection and aggressive initial attack of wildfires we keep the cost of fighting wildfires and the timber losses to a minimum.



Coastal Unit Crew

Fire is a vital part of many of British Columbia's ecosystems, so we do not attack all fires in the same manner. For fires which occur in remote areas, with no or little timber or aesthetic values, or if a wildfire occurs in an area where fire is natural part of the ecosystem, we may pull fire fighters back to a natural fire break, limit action to a key area, or let nature take its course and use our fire fighting resources more effectively elsewhere.



Air tanker dropping retardant

Those fires which are attacked are subject to immediate and vigorous action by initial attack crews. Many fires require additional airborne support in the form of air tankers or helitankers (*see picture*).



Mobile fire camp

Despite the high success rate of our fast initial attack strategy, every summer has its share of big wildfires, known as project fires. **When fires spread beyond the control of initial attack crews, we call on unit crews and contracted fire crews** (*see picture*). When fires burn for extended periods, or where the work load is heavy, we may call upon specialized fire support teams including incident management teams and information teams. Project fires may make use of a mobile fire camp, designed to provide support for fires employing hundreds of people (*see picture*).

British Columbia is a member of the **Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC)**, located in Winnipeg. Through mutual-aid resource-sharing agreements, we can obtain assistance from other provinces and territories and can assist other fire agencies as needed.

Thanks to a strong fire fighting network, fast initial attack and an expert fire fighting program, the B.C. Forest Service is keeping British Columbia's wildland resources safe from wildfire and intact for future generations.