



# Fire Prevention and Preparedness

**The summer of 2017 will be remembered as one of the worst wildfire seasons in British Columbia's history.**

It was unprecedented by measure of the:

- amount of land burned (over 1.2 million hectares)
- total cost of fire suppression (over \$568 million) and
- amount of people displaced (roughly 65,000 evacuated).

The fire season prompted a Provincial State of Emergency that was declared on July 7 and not rescinded until September 15, lasting 70 days.

This was the longest Provincial State of Emergency in the province's history, and the first to be declared since the 2003 firestorm.

In addition, 2017 saw a marked increase in machine fires throughout TAG operations particularly during the period of July to September with most of the machine fires being feller bunchers.

Prevention, preparedness and reporting can make the difference between a small blaze that is quickly brought under control, and a wildfire emergency.

## Prevention

**Fire Extinguishers** – Frequently check fire extinguishers and always have them available.

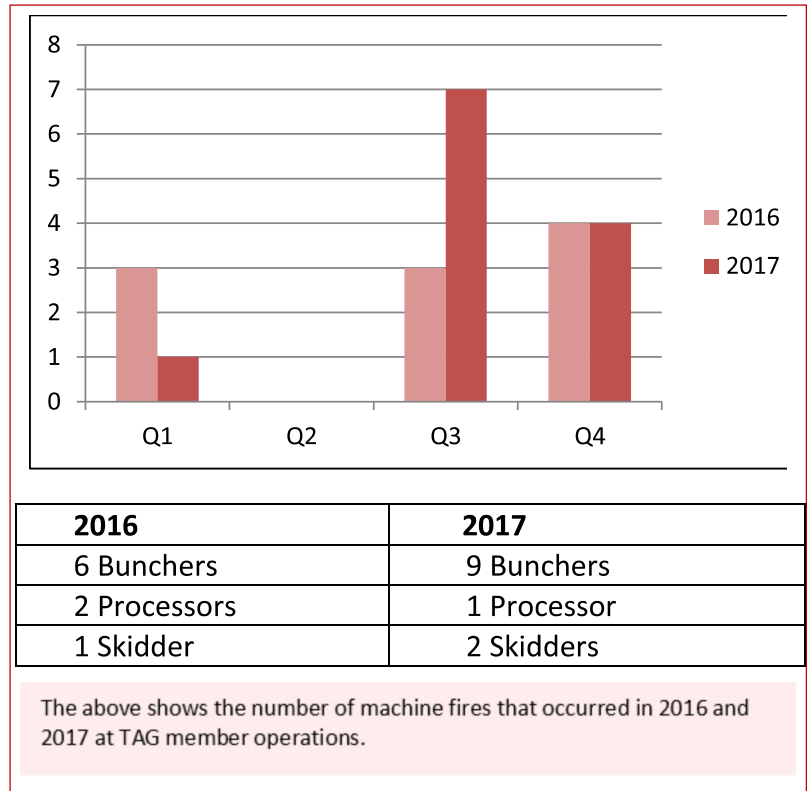
**Fuel** – Never refuel the machine with the machine running, while smoking or near open flames or sparks.

**Debris** – Remove debris from the engine compartment, battery area and other heat producing areas of the machines at least once a day. Parking areas should be on bare ground.

**Flammables** – Regularly clean the machine of oil and grease, and never store oil rags or flammable materials inside the cab.

**Mechanical** – Inspect fluid leaks and repair leaks immediately. Frequently inspect wiring and electrical connections.

**Site conditions** – Pay particular attention when operating on rocky terrain due to the potential for sparks to be generated by the saw and tracks.



## Preparedness

If a fire starts, being ready to respond promptly and effectively are key. Given the limited resources most contractors have on site, you have a much better chance of controlling and extinguishing a small fire as opposed to a large one. Delays due to disorganization and hurried, ineffective actions can allow a small fire to quickly grow to dangerous proportions beyond the capacity of your crew and equipment. There are several aspects to consider:



- **Training** – Before you can direct employees to engage in fire-fighting activities, they must be knowledgeable of the work and the associated hazards they may encounter, as well as the actions they can take to control those hazards. S-100 Basic Fire Suppression and Safety with the necessary S-100A annual refresher is the training standard.
- **Physical Capability** – Firefighting can be physically exhausting work. Before asking your crew to engage in firefighting, assess each crew member's physical capability. Error on the side of caution.
- **Practice** – You can vastly improve your crew's ability to respond by conducting "fire drills" and practicing your Emergency Response Plan on your block.
- **Check Equipment Regularly** – Have someone confirm that vehicles and heavy equipment are equipped with necessary fire tools.
- **Situational Awareness** – Consider the variables (weather, terrain, your people, values at risk), develop some options, and make a plan that fits the situation. Have a plan to evacuate your crew if necessary.

## Report a Wildfire

To report a wildfire call 1 800 663-5555 or \*5555 from a cell phone. All calls are answered by BC Wildfire Service staff at the Provincial Forest Fire Reporting Centre. Any information you can provide is helpful. You will be asked for details such as the fire's:

- Location (GPS or specific road or other markers)
- Size
- Rate of spread
- Fuel type
- Threat to structures/people
- Any firefighting action taken.

In addition, you will want to contact the licensee whose area you are operating in to ensure they have firsthand knowledge of the current situation.

(Note: By the end of 2018, it is anticipated a best practices document will be ready for distribution to industry on feller buncher fire prevention, suppression and egress. The package will be available at [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org))