

# FIRE AND ITS ROLE IN THE CANADIAN FOREST

A. Fire, climate, and soil are three main natural factors that have shaped the present Canadian forest.

- The forest, in its natural state, is ecologically dependent on recycling by random, periodical fires for its long-term stable existence.
- In the boreal forest the main tree species are Black Spruce, Jack Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Trembling Aspen, and White Birch.
- All of these species of trees are able to regenerate even after all the trees have been killed by fire in a large area.
- We will see Aspen suckers coming right from the root systems while other hardwoods can sprout from the bases of dead trees.
- Jack Pine, Lodgepole Pine, and Black Spruce store seeds in their crowns for years and will only shed them after the cones are opened by heat from a fire.



B.

- In pre-European times, ignition of the forest was mainly by lightning. Without good control of the fire, two to three times as much area was burned annually as it does now.
- Ecologically, fire is neither good nor bad. It is just an environmental necessity to keep the forest in its natural state.
- As fire control efforts are increased, it costs more and more to reclaim the annual burned areas by a given amount.
- There is a point at which the cost of further reduction in burned areas will be equal to the value of corresponding increase in the timber supply.
- However, the safety of forestry towns is a primary concern.

C.

- The interaction of ecological and economic factors makes forest fire management complicated. People still wonder about what is the best level of fire-control effort.
- The Canadian Forestry Association along with provincial forestry departments carry out fire-prevention programs aimed at educating people about keeping the forest safe.
- The rule “do not start forest fires” remains very important to every citizen.