

# HOW SASKATCHEWAN FIREFIGHTERS MANAGE FIRES

A.

- Forest fire season usually begins in early April with grass fires that scorch the landscape.
- Then the season moves into high gear in May and June with more to come in the dry, summer months.
- By the time it is over in Saskatchewan an average of 25, 000 kms will have been burned in 10,000 fires across the country.
- 52% of most fires are caused by carelessness and could have been prevented.
- 48% are caused by lightning which can be a natural part of a nearby grassland or forest ecosystem.
- The fire reduces the buildup of dead and decaying leaves, logs, and needles that accumulate on the forest floor.
- The fire will reduce or eliminate the overhead forest canopy so that more sunlight can let things grow from the seeds and roots.
- Plants have adapted to fires in their midst.
  - Lodgepole Pine and Jack Pine have a resin-sealed cone that melts and lets the cones pop open. Thousands of seeds scatter to the ground and grow eventually into trees.
  - Woodpeckers eat the bark beetles and then we will find that other insects begin to live in the newly burned trees.

B.

- Twenty years ago Parks Canada decided it wouldn't interfere in natural processes such as fire, insects and disease unless it threatened neighboring lands.
- Forest managers across North America have introduced programs of deliberately lit "*prescribed fires*" to clean out forest debris and to restore ecosystems that are dependent on fires to thrive. Specialists decide when, where, and how long to allow such fires to burn. They think about weather, vegetation types, fire behavior, and terrain to see if the fire can burn safely.
- This process is controversial in Canada and the United States because landowners and outdoors related businesses believe that timber is a valuable resource. As well, it is hard to convince anyone that burning down trees, even on a small scale makes sense.

