



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 7th, 2009

To: The Media

From: Karen Lindsay, Nanaimo Fire Rescue

Re : Nanaimo Fire Rescue reminds residents to be 'Fire Smart' this summer.

As the May long weekend fast approaches— it marks the traditional beginning of summer for many in British Columbia as families pack up their camp gear and begin to enjoy the outdoors, the sunshine and their travels on the island. With the arrival of summer it is also the beginning of the dry season. The staff at Nanaimo Fire Rescue would like to remind residents to be aware of the increased fire risk to the community that occurs with the warm weather.

Many fires occur in spring and early summer when human activity increases. Spring cleanup fires which are only permitted during April and October occasionally escape control and result in wildfires. When summer arrives, the number of people in the woods increases and as they travel, recreationalists can accidentally cause fires.

Wildland forest fires are capable of spreading at an astonishing rate. In fact, it is estimated that an average 48% of all wildfires are caused by human activity. The best protection against loss, damage or injury due to wildfire is prevention. A wildfire incident will affect everyone in the community and every individual must share the responsibility for the solution. During a wildfire incident there are not as many firefighting units as there are buildings in need of protection. Prevention measures can save your family, home, business or community.

Fire Prevention Officer **Rick Kwasnecha** offers these additional fire safety considerations to prevent wildland fires and to keep your home safe:

- Teach children about fire safety and to not play with lighters and matches.
- **Do not** discard smoking materials from vehicles, use interior ashtrays. Be especially careful around bark mulch. Never dispose of a cigarette anywhere but in an ashtray or other proper receptacle.
- If using Bark Mulch in your gardens ensure they are watered frequently as they can heat up during summer months.
- Dry or dead shrubs, brush, wood piles and combustible debris should be removed within a radius of 30 feet from your home.

- The distance between your house and any nearby tree should be a minimum of 10 feet.
- Clear roof surfaces and gutters regularly to avoid build-up of flammable materials such as leaves and other debris.
- Place connected garden hoses at all sides of your home for emergency use.
- Store gasoline in an approved safety can, away from occupied buildings.
- Stay informed. Listen to the Fire Hazard warnings

Wildfire prevention is about keeping fires from starting. Be “Fire Smart” when enjoying the summer weather. For more information visit the City of Nanaimo website at www.nanaimo.ca or call 250-753-7311 for a brochure.