



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

**FROM BURNS LAKE NATIVE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION,
VILLAGE OF BURNS LAKE, and the REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**

FIRE AT BABINE FOREST PRODUCTS IN BURNS LAKE, BC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 21, 2012 at 8:00 pm

BURNS LAKE – A press conference was held at the Village of Burns Lake Office at 6:00 pm to address the industrial accident at Babine Forest Products. Representatives from Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, Burns Lake Band, the Village of Burns Lake, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, the Burns Lake Volunteer Fire Department, the Burns Lake RCMP, and Hampton Affiliates were present to provide statements and information to the media.

Burns Lake Fire Chief Jim McBride stated that “It was a significant fire, I applaud the efforts of the Burns Lake Fire Department and Houston Fire Department crew members for the job they did in the extreme weather conditions.” “Based on the evidence to date, the RCMP are maintaining control of the investigation. Investigators will be on scene shortly” said Staff Sergeant Grant MacDonald.

The Village of Burns Lake, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, and Burns Lake Native Development Corporation have met with representatives from Hampton Affiliates to discuss the situation and determine how best to support the community. Communication will continue between all organizations to ensure that support response is unified.

“On behalf of the Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and families impacted by this tragedy” said Burns Lake Band Chief and Burns Lake Native Development Corporation President Albert Gerow, “The entire community is in our hearts.”

“I spent time at the Margaret Patrick Memorial Hall with the families and friends of those injured and the families of the two unaccounted for individuals,” said Village of Burns Lake Mayor Luke Strimbold, “All community members are in our thoughts and we ask the community to continue to provide support to one another.”

Northern Health provided an update on the location of patients in a recent media release. Code orange was declared at 10:52 pm on Friday, January 20, 2012 and has since been downgraded. A total of 19 patients were treated with injuries that ranged from minor to critical and some with severe burns. Four patients have been airlifted to larger centers and eight have been transferred to Prince George. Northern Health passes on their sympathy to family, friends, the community of Burns Lake, and the First Nations communities affected by this tragedy.

A Community Meeting to provide updated information to members of the public will be held on Monday, January 23rd, 2012 at 7:00 pm at the Island Gospel Church located on Highway 35 south of town. Representatives from Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, Burns Lake Band, the Village of Burns Lake, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, the Burns Lake Volunteer Fire Department, the Burns Lake RCMP, and Hampton Affiliates will be in attendance at the Community Meeting.

A Lakes District Tragedy Fund has been established through the Canadian Imperial Bank of Canada (CIBC) and donations can be made at any CIBC branch in British Columbia or at the Village of Burns Lake Office. For any questions about donations please contact Cindy or Angelika at 250-692-6683.

Margaret Patrick Memorial Hall will be open 24 hours to provide support to the families of those injured and concerned residents. Grief counselors are on site and Babine Forest Products employees can obtain information about employment insurance at the Hall. Volunteers are needed to assist with providing food and to support those affected. Community members who are available to help are asked to call Bertha Michell at 778-669-0062.

Grief support can be obtained through Northern Health (250-692-2400), Carrier Sekani Family Services (250-692-2387), and Lakes District Community Services (250-692-7577).

An updated media release will be provided at 5:00 pm on Sunday, January 22, 2012 and can be found at www.burnslake.ca.