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\$165,000 NSF grant awarded to UM Wood Chemistry Laboratory for wood waste conversion project

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\$165,000 NSF GRANT AWARDED
TO UM WOOD CHEMISTRY LABORATORY
FOR WOOD WASTE CONVERSION PROJECT

MISSOULA--

A \$165,000 grant has been awarded to the Wood Chemistry Laboratory at the University of Montana in Missoula by the National Science Foundation for a research project dealing with the conversion of wood residues into sugar and sugar derivatives for industrial applications.

Dr. Fred Shafizadeh, professor of chemistry at UM and director of the Wood Chemistry Laboratory, was notified of the grant by the NSF on May 14. The grant will be effective for two years beginning Tuesday, June 1.

The project, entitled "Pyrolytic Conversion of Cellulosic Materials," will focus on developing a way to convert wood residues back to sugar by heating the residues for short periods of time at about 300 degrees centigrade.

Commenting on the value of the study, Shafizadeh said, "With the increasing population and standard of living and the diminishing supply of fossil resources, it is important that we do not waste any of our natural resources and that we learn how to increase application and productivity of them."

According to Shafizadeh, the project director, there are about three billion cubic feet of salvable dead timber, equivalent to about 18 billion board feet or 15 years of harvest, in Montana that could be used as an energy and food source.

"I believe better utilization of these wasted materials could relieve the current economic pressures and contribute to a balanced economic growth for the state without increasing the annual cutting of live trees." Shafizadeh said.

Shafizadeh said that wood conversion is not being practiced in the U.S. now because burning the residues, leaving them to rot or burying them is cheaper than converting the residues to useful materials.