
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development
BC Wildfire Service

Help keep B.C. Day long weekend safe for everyone

VICTORIA – The BC Wildfire Service urges British Columbians to be safe in the woods and reminds everyone that the return of warm weather means an increasing risk of wildfires.

Although the start of this year’s wildfire season was quieter than normal, August is typically the most active month of B.C.’s wildfire season. This is why it is important for British Columbians and visitors to remain vigilant and ensure that they are using fire safely.

Human-caused fires are completely preventable and unnecessarily divert crucial firefighting resources from naturally occurring wildfires. From April 1 through July 29, 2020, the BC Wildfire Service responded to 239 wildfires throughout the province, approximately 85% of which were attributed to human activity.

“We know people want to get out into the great outdoors, but it’s important that everyone stay vigilant about fire safety,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “Fighting wildfires can be challenging at the best of times, but managing them in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic requires BC Wildfire Service staff to operate with even greater care. I urge everyone to support our crews by using fire responsibly and making sure that their activities don’t spark a wildfire this holiday weekend.”

Campfires are currently allowed in all areas of the province that fall under the BC Wildfire Service’s jurisdiction. However, people are urged to use caution and keep an ample supply of water nearby to fully extinguish their campfires.

Larger Category 2 and Category 3 open fires are prohibited in some regions of the province. Up-to-date information about current open burning prohibitions is available on the BC Wildfire Service website at: www.gov.bc.ca/wildfirebans

Local governments and other jurisdictions (e.g., BC Parks) may have their own burning restrictions or bylaws in place. People should also check with those authorities before lighting any fire.

Campfire safety and fire precautions:

- Campfires must not be larger than 0.5 metres high or 0.5 metres wide.
- Never light a campfire or keep it burning in windy conditions. Weather can change quickly, and wind may carry embers to other combustible material.
- Maintain a fireguard around the campfire. This is a fuel-free area where all flammable materials (grass, leaves, kindling, etc.) have been removed right down to the soil.

- Never leave a campfire unattended.
- Have a shovel or at least eight litres of water available to properly extinguish your campfire.
- Make sure the ashes are cool to the touch before retiring for the night or leaving the area for any length of time.

Other precautions:

- Anyone riding an all-terrain vehicle or dirt bike on Crown land must have a spark arrestor installed on the vehicle. To help reduce wildfire risks, check the condition of the muffler, regularly clear buildups of grass or other vegetation from hot spots, stay on dirt paths and avoid riding in tall grass and weeds.
- Smokers must dispose of cigarette butts and other smoking materials responsibly and ensure those materials are completely extinguished.

The government's conservation officers conduct regular patrols throughout British Columbia, while natural resource officers from the Compliance and Enforcement Branch work closely with BC Wildfire Service staff to investigate the cause of wildfires and any improper fire use when an open burning prohibition is in effect.

Anyone found in contravention of an open-burning prohibition may be issued a violation ticket for \$1,150, required to pay an administrative penalty of up to \$10,000 or, if convicted in court, fined up to \$100,000 and/or sentenced to one year in jail. If the contravention causes or contributes to a wildfire, the person responsible may be ordered to pay all firefighting and associated costs.

To report a wildfire, unattended campfire or open burning violation, call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone. For up-to-date information on current wildfire activity, burning restrictions, road closures and air quality advisories, call 1 888 3-FOREST or visit: www.bcwildfire.ca

People can also follow the latest wildfire news:

- on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BCGovFireInfo>
- on Facebook: <http://facebook.com/BCForestFireInfo>

Learn More:

Current open burning prohibitions: www.gov.bc.ca/wildfirebans

Wildfire prevention: www.gov.bc.ca/wildfireprevention

British Columbia FireSmart: <https://firesmartbc.ca/>

Contact:

Provincial Fire Information
BC Wildfire Service
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