
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020FLNR0055-001646
Sept. 3, 2020

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

Public urged to remain vigilant as fire season continues

VICTORIA – With warm temperatures persisting in many regions of the province and the potential for new ignitions still high in some areas, the BC Wildfire Service urges British Columbians to stay alert and use fire safely over the Labour day weekend.

Recent wildfires, such as the 2,122-hectare Christie Mountain blaze south of Penticton, have vividly demonstrated how quickly fire can spread. Although northern portions of B.C. are currently experiencing cooler conditions, fire prevention is a responsibility that everyone shares — no matter where people live.

“I thank all British Columbians who are doing their part by staying alert for potential fire risks and taking open burning prohibitions seriously,” said Doug Donaldson, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. “I hope that everyone enjoys the Labour Day long weekend, while also recognizing that the wildfire season is not over yet.”

Anyone planning to spend time outdoors this weekend is encouraged to use caution with any activity that could potentially spark a wildfire. Human-caused fires are completely preventable and can unnecessarily divert firefighting resources from naturally occurring wildfires or fires that are already burning.

From April 1 through Sept. 2, 2020, the BC Wildfire Service responded to 586 wildfires throughout the province, 45% of which were human caused. Over 11,000 hectares have burned in B.C. since April 1.

People are urged to take the following precautions to help prevent wildfire while outdoors this weekend and in the weeks ahead:

Campfires:

- Campfires are currently allowed in all areas of the province that fall under the BC Wildfire Service’s jurisdiction. However, people should check with local governments and other authorities (e.g., BC Parks) to see if any burning restrictions or bylaws are in effect.
- 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 a campfire.
- Make sure the ashes are cool to the touch before retiring for the night or leaving the area

for any length of time.

Additional precautions:

- Anyone riding an all-terrain vehicle on or within 300 metres of forested land or rangeland must have a spark arrestor installed on the vehicle. To help reduce wildfire risks, check the condition of the muffler, regularly clear build-ups of grass or other vegetation from hot spots, stay on dirt paths, and avoid tall grass and weeds.
- Smokers must dispose of cigarette butts and other smoking materials responsibly, ensuring they 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, may be required to pay an administrative penalty of up to \$10,000 or, if convicted in court, may be 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 follow the latest wildfire news:

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

The BC Wildfire Service mobile app provides users with real-time updates about current wildfire activity in the province, including push notifications and "wildfires near me" information. The app is free and available for Apple and Android devices:

- App Store: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bc-wildfire-service/id1477675008?ls=1>
- Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.bc.gov.WildfireInformation>

Learn More:

Fire prevention is a year-round responsibility. British Columbians play a crucial role in mitigating wildfire risks around their homes and in their communities by using FireSmart principles, which can reduce risks to life and property in even the most extreme wildfire conditions. The FireSmart Begins at Home Manual and more information about the FireSmart program are available online at: www.firesmartbc.ca

Information about current open burning prohibitions in B.C.: www.gov.bc.ca/wildfirebans

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

Contact:

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