
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
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Emergency Management British Columbia
Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development

Stay safe on the Labour Day long weekend

VICTORIA – Summer is gradually coming to a close, but the wildfire risk in many parts of the province remains a very serious concern. British Columbians are urged to exercise caution and remain vigilant to help prevent human-caused wildfires.

During this period of heightened wildfire risk, the British Columbia government is strongly recommending that people stay completely out of the backcountry within the Cariboo Fire Centre, Kamloops Fire Centre and Southeast Fire Centre.

The public is advised to not visit recreation sites in the Cariboo, Kamloops or Southeast fire centres over the Labour Day long weekend. Visitors currently camping and using recreation sites in the Cariboo, Kamloops and Southeast fire centres are encouraged to leave.

Recreation Sites and Trails BC

Closures of numerous recreation site and trails are in effect in the Cariboo, Southeast and Kamloops fire centres. For a complete list of current closures, please visit:

<http://www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca/closures.aspx>

Recreationalists are encouraged to avoid travelling in the backcountry in areas where wildfires are active or where the fire danger rating is high to extreme. Given the current fire danger ratings and number of active wildfires, further restrictions may be considered if people do not stay out of the backcountry.

More information on Recreation Sites and Trails BC is available at:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/recreation/camping-hiking/sites-trails>

Current Wildfire Activity

From April 1 to Aug. 30, 2017, the BC Wildfire Service responded to 1,156 wildfires throughout the province, with 425 of those fires caused by people. Over 1,073,010 hectares have been burned in the province to date — the highest number of hectares burned since government started keeping such records in 1912.

The 2017 fire season is far from over and much of British Columbia is still experiencing extreme fire danger ratings. Significant wildfire activity is expected to continue into the fall.

Human-caused fires are completely preventable and unnecessarily tie up firefighting resources that could be used to deal with naturally occurring wildfire starts and the wildfires that are already burning.

Campfires are banned in many regions of the province. Information about current open burning prohibitions (including campfire bans) is available on the BC Wildfire Service website at: <http://bcfireinfo.for.gov.bc.ca/hprScripts/WildfireNews/Bans.asp>

Off-road vehicle prohibition

The operation of any off-road vehicle for recreational purposes on Crown land is currently prohibited throughout the Cariboo Fire Centre, Kamloops Fire Centre and Southeast Fire Centre. The operation of any off-road vehicles in these regions during the current wildfire situation creates a potential wildfire risk.

A map of the affected areas is available online at: <http://ow.ly/QTm330e9G5n>

In addition, all on-highway vehicles must remain on defined road surfaces. While trucks and other on-highway vehicles are permitted on designated roads, they are not allowed off-road. The prohibition of off-road vehicles and on-highway vehicles does not apply to private lands or national parks. It also does not apply to emergency responders or to agriculture or commercial/industrial users who operate vehicles for farming, emergency response or business purposes.

With bow hunting season scheduled to begin Friday, Sept. 1 and rifle hunting season on Sept. 10, 2017, registered guides and outfitters are advised that the off-road vehicle prohibition does not apply to them while they're using ORVs for business purposes. This includes guiding clients who are using ORVs to hunt or gain access to the backcountry. This supersedes any previous communication regarding ORV use by guide outfitters in the southeast.

Anyone found in contravention of this prohibition may be issued a violation ticket in the amount of \$767. If the contravention causes or contributes to a wildfire, the person responsible may be ordered to pay all firefighting and associated costs.

Fines

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.

Know Before You Go - DriveBC

Provincial transportation routes will be busy and drivers can expect possible delays due to the higher volume of long-weekend travellers. Please plan your trip well in advance, pack food and bottled water for yourselves as well as your pets, allow for plenty of extra time, and drive safely. For up-to-date route information, please visit: www.drivebc.ca or on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/drivebc>

Know Before You Go – BC Parks

Most provincial parks remain open for recreational and camping activities. However, due to the serious nature of the current wildfire situation, numerous BC Parks remain closed to protect public safety.

Prior to closing parks, BC Parks works in co-ordination with the BC Wildfire Service and multiple factors are taken into consideration, such as weather conditions and forecasts, access routes, the presence of active fires, and fire-danger ratings. Wildfires are dynamic and circumstances can change quickly. BC Parks and the BC Wildfire Service assess situations on a daily basis.

The public is encouraged to continue to monitor BC Parks' website for the most up-to-date information on provincial park closure.

British Columbians and visitors are urged to follow the instructions of BC Parks staff, BC Wildfire Service officials, the RCMP, conservation officers and other authorized personnel in the area. See an alphabetical list of B.C. parks and their status at:

www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parks/

BC Parks: www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks

Discover Camping: <https://secure.camis.com/Discovercamping/>

Recreation Sites and Trails BC: www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca/default.aspx

Health and Wellness

Air quality in B.C. continues to fluctuate due to wildfire activity. Poor air quality can be harmful to health, especially for children, older adults, and those with heart and lung conditions. Forest-fire smoke is a complex and dynamic mixture of gases and small particles that can irritate the respiratory system and cause systemic inflammation.

Here are some tips to help minimize health effects:

- If you have a chronic condition, have rescue medication on hand at all times and a plan to follow if your rescue medication cannot bring your condition under control.
- Look for indoor environments that might be less smoky, such as shopping malls, community centres and libraries.
- Avoid physical exertion because the amount of smoke you breathe increases as your breathing rate increases.
- Keep hydrated as it helps your body deal with inflammation.

If you are feeling unwell, you can call 811, a free-of-charge provincial health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia. If you or a loved one is experiencing a medical emergency, please call 911.

For more information on health and safety, see WorkSafeBC's Wildfire Smoke FAQ online: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/what-to-do-if-evacuated-from-your-home

Learn More:

For more information on wildfire prevention: www.gov.bc.ca/wildfireprevention

To report a wildfire or open-burning violation, call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone. To report suspicious activities, environmental damage or a natural-resource violation, call 1 877 952-RAPP (7277) or *7277 on a cellphone.

Detailed information about current open-fire restrictions is available on the BC Wildfire Service

website: www.gov.bc.ca/wildfirebans

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

For information on evacuation orders and alerts, stay tuned to your local authority's public information channels, as well as Emergency Info BC for updates:
www.emergencyinfobc.gov.bc.ca/

You can follow the latest wildfire news:

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

Contact:

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