



In this Issue:

Forest Service Roads

Special Interest Groups

Events

Our Partners in Detection

How You Can Assist the Crews

With a few unfortunate exceptions, members of the public have been wonderfully co-operative in respecting open burning prohibitions in the Coastal Fire Centre. They have also diligently reported wildfires and shared important fire prevention messages with others.

However, many people ask us what else they could do to support and encourage the province's firefighting crews. The simple answer is that they are already doing a lot. The longer answer is that there are always other opportunities to help out.

For example, if you know someone who's working on a firefighting crew, you could offer to help out the person's family while he or she is away from home. (Even just offering to mow the lawn for them could make a difference.)

If you can't help out physically, you could always show your support for firefighters online. To send a message of thanks, you can go to BCForestFireInfo on Facebook or to https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/pscripts/pab/fordisc/view_discussion.asp?TopicID=40.

Firefighters are dedicated, hardworking people and often view their work as a service to the people of British Columbia, but they also appreciate all of the positive comments that they receive from the public.

Sometimes people want to offer food or other items to our crews, but they're provincial employees and therefore can't accept gifts from the public. An alternative would be a donation in the name of a fire crew to your local food bank or a donation to the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

Another way you can help out in your community is to offer your support to a local volunteer fire department. They are always looking to buy equipment or pay for additional training. If you're fit and you have the time, you could even become a volunteer yourself.

Coastal Fire Centre crews often work with local fire departments, participate in interagency training or assist local departments as needed. Helping your volunteer fire department is one of the best ways to help our crews.

Public use of forest service roads

A forest service road (FSR) is an industrial-use road established under the *Forest Act* and administered under the Forest Service Road Use Regulation (Forest and Range Practices Act).

It is important for you to understand your legal obligations when using this type of road.

Not all forest service roads are maintained by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, but the management of roads for forest recreation purposes falls under the jurisdiction of Recreation Sites and Trails BC. In some cases the ministry will continue to maintain community-use forest service roads until the public is otherwise notified. For more information, visit: https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/dck/engineering/dck_engineering.htm

BC Wildfire Service staff spend a lot of time travelling on these roads and they know how to use them safely, but members of the public who recreate in the backcountry are not always aware of the rules that govern the use of these roads.

If you use a forest service road, you must be aware of the following rules:

- A person must operate a motor vehicle on a forest service road at a speed that (a) is safe for the conditions, and (b) does not exceed the lesser of (i) 80 km/h, and (ii) the speed posted on a relevant traffic control device.
- A person must not operate or cause to be operated a motor vehicle or trailer, other than a motor vehicle or trailer described by section 2 (5) of the *Motor Vehicle Act*, on a forest service road unless (a) the driver, motor vehicle and trailer are insured under a valid and subsisting contract of accident insurance providing insurance against liability to third parties in the amount of at least \$200,000, and (b) the driver carries written evidence, supplied by the insurer, of the insurance referred to in paragraph (a), or a copy of that written evidence, and produces it, on demand, to a peace officer or an official.

For more information about the Forest Service Road Use Regulation, visit: http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/70_2004

To Report a Wildfire:
1-800-663-5555
Or Cell *5555



Reporting a Wildfire



Forests are resilient and they will grow back but prescribed burning (controlled) can reduce the ferocity and destruction of an uncontrolled wildfire.

Reporting a wildfire is easy, but some people hesitate doing so because they think that others must have already reported it or they think “it’s probably nothing.” But if you see something that doesn’t feel right to you or something that looks like a column of smoke, please report it.

The same thing goes if you see someone contravening an open burning prohibition, such as a campfire ban. A lot of people are reluctant to report these incidents because they don’t think it’s any of their business or they are wary of repercussions. But if you don’t report it, who will?

The Coastal Fire Centre has received several reports of people who have witnessed illegal campfires and then confronted the individuals responsible for lighting it.

We have also received reports about people who lit a fire illegally and then threatened the person who pointed out that their fire was prohibited. This sort of behaviour takes the open burning infraction to

another level, because these people have not only contravened a prohibition, but have also “uttered threats.” That is illegal and anyone who does it can be criminally charged.

We want people to report burning infractions, but we do not want to see anyone threatened or injured over the reporting of an illegal campfire. So unless you feel perfectly safe notifying someone that their campfire is not permitted, call it in!

One of the reasons why the BC Wildfire Service has a reporting line is for the safety of the public, both from wildfire threats and from reactions of people who are not following the rules.

To report a wildfire, abandoned campfire or open burning violation, call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone.



Relationships with special-interest groups

At the Coastal Fire Centre, we work with numerous groups who are interested in specific topics or have a particular area of concern. They may be interested in a geographic location or in protecting a specific plant or animal.

Staff within each fire zone of the Coastal Fire Centre maintain lists of these groups, so when a wildfire occurs in an area that interest them, we can contact them to share information, maps and other details related to that fire and how it might affect their special interests. By the same token, these groups can contact our office to share any issues they’ve come across in that specific area.

It’s important for us to maintain good relationships with these groups, since they often supply important information about areas within our jurisdiction. They are often local experts on the terrain and they can identify significant sites or other areas of concern.

While many organizations have a specific focus, we also deal with a variety of First Nations people who generally have broad interests within a geographic area. These interests may include business, ecological or environmental concerns, but may also encompass historical and cultural interests.

The BC Wildfire Service takes pride in its ability to address the concerns of multiple parties and to try to

strike a workable balance, either by suppressing the fire or by managing habitat in consultation with landowners and other interested parties. Our priorities, however, are to protect the safety of people and, secondly, to help maintain healthy forests.

Over the years, the Coastal Fire Centre has:

- supported the Nature Conservancy of Canada in their restoration of the Cowichan Gary Oak Preserve
- conducted prescribed burning operations in the Haylmore area to promote berry production and reduce fire hazards, in concert with the N’Quatqu Band Council and the First Nations’ Emergency Services Society of B.C.
- worked with a conservancy group in the Duncan area which was concerned about a rare lichen species that was growing in an area affected by fire (our crews worked hard to put out that fire with a light hand).

With each new wildfire or prescribed burn, the BC Wildfire Service works hard to serve the people of B.C. in a professional manner that benefits our communities.

To Report a Wildfire:
1-800-663-5555
Or Call *5555



Strata councils and FireSmart principles

Strata councils govern all kinds of communal properties. People often think of “stratas” as high-rise buildings or gated communities of some sort, but strata councils can also govern vacation properties or rural residential areas.

What all of these properties share is the idea of “common land”. The governance of this common land is spelled out in B.C.’s *Strata Property Act*, which defines how communal land is to be managed and maintained for the benefit of the owners.

The *Strata Property Act* specifies the powers, duties and activities of a strata council, including meetings, voting and writing bylaws. It is this council structure that makes these properties unique and also aids wildfire response.

Many strata vacation properties are in remote areas that can only be reached via natural resource roads. Some strata vacation properties

include buildings, which range from very simple structures that are only used periodically to more elaborate homes that are used as primary residences.

Since the *Strata Property Act* requires a strata property to establish a council, elect officials and keep owners informed of significant developments, the council can be invaluable in ensuring that owners are updated about any nearby wildfires.

Because the strata already has an organization in place, it is also relatively easy for it to support FireSmart activities on common land that will benefit the community as a whole. Strata properties are already configured in such a way that the owners could support a FireSmart Community project and help each other protect their rural properties from wildfire threats.

Summer events and wildfire risks

Summer events such as music festivals are another variable that BC Wildfire Service staff must contend with as the deal with multiple wildfires. The BC Wildfire Service receives numerous inquiries from both organizers and opponents of these events during the summer months.

Many of these events are great for local businesses. Responsible event organizers want their functions to proceed smoothly, with no negative incidents on the premises during the event. Although some unexpected problems may occur, effective emergency planning can help stop a situation going disastrously wrong.

Plans for effective fire suppression and emergency escape routes are just two elements of these preparations. What is most important, however, is for event planners to not let some transgressions “slide” in an effort to appease guests.

Having clear rules in place and sticking to them — and being prepared to deal with people who contravene the rules — is really important. If concertgoers or guests know that the event management will not overlook bad behaviour (e.g. starting campfires when a campfire ban is in effect, smokers wandering out of designated smoking areas

or failing to properly extinguish smoking materials) then the majority of people will abide by the rules. Policing such functions is an important part of event management.

Sometimes members of the public approach the BC Wildfire Service when they are unhappy about a planned event. However, the BC Wildfire Service is not in the business of policing events and does not have the authority to stop or force the cancellation of an event.

Nonetheless, it routinely marks many of these large events on its calendar and may strategically prepare firefighting resources when a large crowd is expected.

If you are attending such an event, please do your part and follow the rules. If you see others acting irresponsibly, notify the event management. Good



event planners want their concert or activity to go off without a hitch and never want to put their guests in harm’s way.

To Report a
Wildfire:
1-800-663-5555
Or Cell
*5555

To Report a Wildfire: 1-800-663-5555 Or Cell *5555

To Date in Coastal

Fires to Date

Person Caused 126

Lighting Caused 43

Total Number of Fires 169

Fire Danger Rating as of

Aug 14



Current Prohibitions (within WMB jurisdictional area)

Campfire (All Coastal with the exception of North Island Central Coast and Campbell River Natural Resource Districts, Haida Gwaii and the Fog Zone)
Category 2 Open Fire (All Coastal)
Category 3 Open Fire (All Coastal)

You are partners in detection

Each year when the fire season arrives, members of the public step up to voice their opinions on how the BC Wildfire Service is doing, declare their support for our crews and the work that they do and — most importantly — report wildfires that they see.

Without the ongoing assistance of many supportive and observant people, we would not be able to respond to many wildfires as quickly as we do.

We have had wildfires reported from ferries, naval vessels, international flights, local pilots, forestry workers, and people on vacation or on their way to work. Multiple reports help us triangulate the location of a fire and allow us to give advance information to crews before they arrive at the site of a fire.

When you report a fire, you will be asked a number of questions. While this may be a bit frustrating when you just want us to “get someone out there”, these questions have a purpose. Your answers let our fire operations staff give the crew they dispatch a better idea of what they could face when they get to the fire and what firefighting resources may be required.

You will be asked questions about the geography and terrain where the fire is located. You will also be asked about the estimated size of the fire, what “rank” it’s burning at (the dispatcher will explain what that means), what kind of fuels (e.g. pine trees, grasslands, scrub) the fire is burning in and what the fire is close to (roads, structures, power lines, etc.).

Don’t worry if you can’t fully answer every question. Just provide as much detail as you can and stay on the line until the dispatcher finishes asking you questions. Sometimes small details that may not seem important could make a big difference, like the colour of the smoke.

This week is traditionally the peak of the fire season in the Coastal Fire Centre. You are partners in our ongoing effort to protect communities from wildfires and we need all the assistance that you can give us.

Don’t forget: If you see a column of smoke or something that just doesn’t look right to you, please call 1 800 663-5555 or *5555 on your cellphone.

Weather

Normally we write At Coastal in this space but for the most up-to-date information on fires go to: www.bcwildfire.ca and please be careful out there!

SYNOPSIS: Moisture rotating around an upper low tracking northward over Washington spreads scattered convective showers and thundershowers into parts of the Fraser zone later today, becoming spottier in coverage over the South Island and Pemberton zones. Near or above average temperatures are expected under a mix of sun and cloud for the Mid Island, North Island, Sunshine Coast & Mid Coast zones this afternoon with progressively cooler and cloudier weather to the south & east. Surface heating combined with an upper trough extending from the low over Washington State towards the Mid Coast supports a risk of thunderstorms over these generally warmer & drier areas north of roughly Port Alberni – Jervis Inlet this afternoon. Convective showers and thundershowers linger over the parts of the Fire Centre tonight (favouring the Fraser zone) with isolated spots potentially receiving more than 50mm of rain by Saturday morning (24 hour total). A shortwave trough embedded in a prevailing northwesterly flow brings mainly cloudy skies and isolated/scattered showers to the Sunshine coast, Pemberton and Fraser zones on Saturday while a mix of sun and cloud and warmer & drier conditions should be seen elsewhere. Good recoveries in most areas each night.

OUTLOOK: A break between weak systems should be seen on Sunday allowing temperatures to rebound a few degrees in most areas (mid to upper twenties in the warmer and drier sections of the Island and mainland) with minimum Island RHs near 25% - closer to 20% in parts of the Mainland north of Pemberton. The next shortwave trough and associated Pacific frontal system approaches from the northwest Sunday night or Monday bringing increasing N or NW winds, lower humidities and not much in terms of rainfall amounts/coverage (potential for poor overnight recoveries in some areas Monday night). A drier and more stable northwesterly flow should regain control over the region on Tuesday allowing isolated low elevation locations across the south to rebound above 30 degrees under mainly sunny skies while most areas peak in the mid to upper twenties.

6 TO 10 DAY: Near or slightly above seasonal temperatures, generally sunny skies and light to moderate inflow or northwesterly winds are expected next Wednesday and Thursday before the next weak frontal system and associated upper trough bring increasing wind, partly cloudy skies and a few isolated showers (risk of a thunderstorm). A warming and drying trend should return by the following weekend as the region becomes positioned once again between systems in a generally dry northwesterly flow.