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How to Fight a Wildfire

Detection is the first step toward extinguishing a wildland fire. In British Columbia, fires are reported by three main sources: the public or people working in the forest, MFR systems: towers, lightning monitoring and Aircraft Patrols.

When a fire is reported, the fire control office dispatches the nearest available resources as quickly as possible. Either Initial Attack crews or airtankers are usually the first to the scene.

Once the initial attack crews arrive at the fire scene, speed is key. In B.C., our goal is to contain fires at four hectares or fewer. Initial attack crews ensure fires are attacked while they are small, minimizing costs and damage. By doing so, initial attack resources become available for the next fire.

Crews arrive at the fire site with hand tools, chainsaws, and water pumps that draw water from

streams, rivers, and lakes. To stop the fire from spreading, crews remove fuel, oxygen or heat from the fire. If the fire is spreading quickly, airtankers and helicopters will be used. Once the flames have been controlled, crews work to contain the fire by building a fireguard, which is a trench from which all flammable materials are removed. All forest fuels between the fireguard and the fire are eliminated. Once contained, the fire is mopped up by ensuring that all burning material has been extinguished by **cold trailing**. **Cold trailing** involves feeling for burning materials with bare hands, finding embers, and extinguishing them.

There are some fires that cannot be contained by initial attack and require a sustained attack. This usually occurs when the fire conditions are extreme because of weather, topography and/or forest fuel conditions.

At the scene, an assessment is made as to whether

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Glossary of Fire Terms

Interface—An interface fire is a fire that puts communities and people at risk.

Active—An active fire is a fire that is burning.

MopUp—Mop-up is the act of making a fire area safe. It begins after the fire has been brought under control, and before suppression work is reduced to patrol. Mop-up may involve cold-trailing (feeling with one's hands for remaining hot spots) and extinguishing all smoldering materials with water or soil.

Patrol—Patrol involves watching for fire spotting outside the fire line while the fire is still active. After mop-up is complete, patrollers watch for any smoke or fire that may rekindle after mop-up is complete. A fire in patrol status is a fire that has been extinguished but is being monitored.

For more information check out:

www.bcwildfire.ca

Cigarettes

In B.C., approximately 50% of all wildfires each year are human-caused. All of these wildfires are preventable.

During fire season cigarettes that are improperly extinguished and thrown into forested or grassy areas can be a major concern. **Carelessly discarded cigarettes can and do start fires.**

Always use ashtrays when driving, camping, hiking, or otherwise enjoying the outdoors. Individuals who choose to smoke in forested or rural areas should be advised that if their discarded cigarette causes a forest fire, they may be held liable. Violation tickets can range from \$173.—\$345., whereas penalties for causing a wildfire, even accidentally, can range up to \$1,000,000. and three years' imprisonment, as well as cost and damages.

If you spot a wildfire call:

1-800-663-5000 or
*5555 on your cellular



To Date in Coastal

Fires to Date

Person
Caused 159

Lighting
Caused 332

Total
Number
of Fires
Actioned 496

Hectares
burnt 5574

Number of
Incidents
Responded
To this year 1453

Fire Danger Rating



High—
Extreme

Be Safe!

or not an initial attack will be successful. If it is determined that a sustained attack will be needed, additional fire control resources are immediately requested. Resources that may be brought in include: fire fighters, airtankers, helicopters, and heavy equipment such as bulldozers, excavators, skidders and water tankers.

A team of specialists will be dispatched for complicated or large fires, called project fires. The team consists of an Incident Commander, Operations Chief, Logistics Chief, Finance & Administration Chief and Plans Chief who all have extensive experience in fire behaviour, fire suppression methods, laws and regulations, and agency responsibilities. Project fires usually require the installation of facilities or fire camps to house and support crews, equipment, fuel, retardant and communications and information.

North End of Pitt Lake, photo taken July 30, 2009. Lightning fire, currently 60% contained.



Today at Coastal

In the coastal region of British Columbia, there are over 180 wildfires burning. Most were started by lightning; many are in remote areas.

Resources are being focussed on fires that have the potential to affect communities, homes, and important infrastructure.

Over 300 firefighters (drawn from BC and Ontario, along with contract workers and forest industry crews) are deployed, along with 72 helicopters and some airtankers.

Cooler weather is predicted over the next few days, but that is unlikely to change the fire danger rating. Only significant rainfall will affect it.

The public can help by staying out of backcountry areas, obeying fire bans, and staying vigilant. The fire situation in the province is critical. We hope do not want to fight any fires caused by human activity, so please be careful.

Observe, Record, Report!

Weather Forecast

SYNOPSIS—Cool, moist and somewhat unstable air lies over the region this morning, the aftermath of yesterday's frontal passage. Conditions will gradually improve during the day and some sun breaks are expected this afternoon and Wednesday. Mid Coast and northern Vancouver Island will be a little slower to improve.

OUTLOOK.—Thursday through Saturday. An upper high pressure ridge will build over the Pacific and gradually move into the region through the period. Warmer drier conditions will accompany the ridge.

LONG TERM TREND—6 to 10 days. The upper ridge will settle in next week. Temperatures will rise to above normal values and humidity values will drop significantly.

A drying trend is expected to begin over the next week and warmer and drier than normal conditions are anticipated to extend well into the fall.