

## Coastal Fire Centre

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### CURRENT STATISTICS

Fires to-date: 22

Hectares burned: 235

Human-caused: 22

Lightning-caused: 0

### BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

**Campfire:** No Ban

**Category 2:** In Effect

**Category 3:** In Effect

**Resource Mgmt Open Fire:** In Effect

**Forest Use Restrictions:** No Ban

[Prohibitions section of bcwildfire.ca for full details.](https://bcwildfire.ca/prohibitions)

## Magee Road Fire V30067

The Coastal Fire Centre's largest wildfire so far this season has been the Magee Road fire near Squamish, which was reported late in the afternoon on April 15, 2020. The fire was already spreading quickly when the first BC Wildfire Service staff person arrived at the scene, and due to the erratic fire behaviour and concern for public safety, a number of local residences were tactically evacuated.

BC Wildfire Service crews initially fought the fire on the valley bottom, but two hours later the fire had jumped 560 metres up the slope. Fortunately, fire behaviour had reduced considerably by dusk. The wind and temperature had dropped, and the fire had burned up the slope onto more level ground. By the end of the day, firefighters reported that it had become a ground fire with some open flame (Rank 1 and Rank 2). Nevertheless, a crew remained on site overnight in case the wind picked up. Crews were able to make good progress during favourable conditions on the first days of the



incident by using infrared scanners to locate and extinguish hotspots.

Over the next few days, firefighting crews from the Pemberton Fire Zone were

## Magee Road Fire cont'd

reinforced with personnel from another fire zone, resulting in a total of 47 firefighters working on the Magee Road fire. They were supported by three helicopters, three excavators, two structure protection units (large-scale sprinklers) and four danger tree fallers.

Firefighting crews were given three specific objectives to focus on: the valley bottom, the slope on the north flank of the fire, and the slope on the south flank of the fire. On the valley bottom where most of the area's homes were located, crews were assigned to work with structure protection units and to work on any visible fire. On the slopes, crews constructed temporary helicopter landing pads, brought water up the slope, and built access routes to make it easier to reach areas where the fire was burning. Some areas that are largely inaccessible were bucketed with water and continued to be closely monitored.

All of this firefighting activity was made easier by the many agencies who have worked cooperatively on this incident: the RCMP acted quickly to evacuate households threatened by the fire, and set up a roadblock that allowed firefighters to do their work unimpeded; the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District and the Squamish First Nation quickly implemented evacuation alerts and evacuation orders; and the Canadian Red Cross stepped in to aid those displaced by the fire. An Emergency Operating Centre supported by Emergency Management BC was quickly established with the Municipality of Squamish, the Squamish First Nations and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District. Representatives from these agencies and jurisdictions were joined by others in the response effort, including representatives from BC Hydro and other infrastructure operators.

Rain fell on the weekend of April 25-26 and with our fire weather forecaster anticipating "troughy" conditions which produce cool and wet weather, crews have been monitoring the fire for any visible smoke and are allowing the weather to do its part to help extinguish this fire. Once sunny skies and favorable flying

conditions return, a second infrared scan of the fire will be done to identify any residual hotspots. Those hotspots will be worked on and the fire site will be patrolled for a period of time before crews can declare the fire "out". The Magee Road wildfire was mapped at 203 hectares and is currently classified as "under control".

To help all BC Wildfire Service staff better understand how to respond appropriately to wildfires in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, an operational review of the Magee Road wildfire was conducted.





## Magee Road Fire cont'd

### Fighting wildfires in a COVID-19 world

By Mie Yamashita, Wildfire Assistant, Pemberton

On April 15, 2020, the Magee Road wildfire started in the Upper Squamish Valley. This interface fire grew quickly and multiple firefighting resources were dispatched to deal with it.

For most of the crews who attended, it was their first fire of the 2020 season. Prior to this incident, firefighters had been primarily working and training remotely. Measures were taken when responding to this fire to promote physical distancing and good hygiene practices on the fireline.

Measures that worked well included the following:

- Personnel were assigned to a specific truck and did not ride in different vehicles.
- Work units avoided intermingling on the fireline.
- Vehicles were pre-stocked with hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies, and the trucks were sanitized after use.
- Handwashing stations (which included hand sanitizer) were set up at staging areas.
- All meals were catered by one restaurant, and one person picked up the food for the entire work unit.
- Crews commuted back to their homes after their shifts.
- Operational briefings were deliberately limited to essential staff only.



## Preparing for the 2020 Wildfire Season

### Introduction to Predictive Services

The Predictive Services unit (PSU) is a growing business area within the BC Wildfire Service. It is a multi-disciplinary team of fire behaviour specialists, weather forecasters, and information technology and data analysts working to deliver information and intelligence in innovative and practical ways. The PSU helps with risk-based decision making for wildfire prevention, preparedness, response and recovery through information and analysis using best available science, technology and human expertise.

Wildfire preparedness and response products provide valuable information for forecasting fire behaviour in different fuel types, terrain and fire weather conditions in British Columbia. The PSU prepares several products that provide timely advice to provincial, regional and incident management teams to support decision making before, during and after a wildfire event. Some examples of these products include:

Product	Description
External seasonal update	A summary of proceeding conditions and forecasted fire weather conditions for the short-term, current season and long-term outlook.
Fire growth maps and reports	Short-term (one to three days) reports and long-range fire growth projections. The maps and accompanying reports document the process (assumptions, weather, fuel types, etc.) used to derive the products.
Fire behaviour forecast	The fire behaviour forecast provides information regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forecasted weather;</li><li>• actual and forecasted fire weather indices values;</li><li>• fire behaviour general and specific information; and</li><li>• safety messages as they pertain to fire behaviour.</li></ul>
Weather values maps	Maps include: temperature; relative humidity; wind speed ; wind direction; and precipitation.
Climatology reports	Graphs mapping historical records of the values recorded at weather stations. Each weather station has its own set of graphs. The current year is tracked along with percentile figures from the historic records for comparison.

## Preparing for the 2020 Wildfire Season

### Spring 2020 Seasonal Outlook

Toward the end of 2019, some areas of the province experienced persistent and extended drought conditions. However, the snowpack in those areas (the far north, northwest, far southeast and the Okanagan) are now at or above normal levels. As a result, wildfire fuel conditions are near normal throughout the province this spring.

B.C. has started to experience grassfire activity. These fires are occurring in valley bottoms where light fuels, such as grasses, can dry out quickly in sunny or windy conditions. This is a typical pattern for this time of year. The BC Wildfire Service is expecting wildfire activity to increase in snow-free areas where these light fuels (grasses and needles) are present. Current fire suppression tactics are successfully holding most of these wildfires to a small size.

Seasonal temperature forecasts for May indicate a moderate probability of normal temperatures for this period. Precipitation patterns are more difficult to predict. Current forecasting data indicates that May will experience “normal to dry” weather patterns.

Considering the current forecasts and fire activity levels, the BC Wildfire Service expects a spring wildfire season that will be consistent with long-term patterns in B.C.

### SEASONAL OUTLOOK

Find the latest seasonal outlook on our BC Wildfire website at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/wildfire-situation>.





## Preparing for the 2020 Wildfire Season

### COVID-19 Adaptations

The COVID-19 situation remains dynamic in British Columbia and elsewhere around the world, and the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) is continually adapting to changing conditions. BCWS has implemented appropriate measures to protect its employees, while ensuring that it [remains prepared to deal with whatever this year's flood and fire seasons may bring](#).

The BC Wildfire Service has a first responder mandate to address natural hazards (first and foremost, those related to wildfire) and it supports the government's emergency response efforts in many other ways. When planning for operational continuity, BCWS staff look at how the organization as a whole should be managed in light of the COVID-19 situation.

The BC Wildfire Service has established an Adaptation and Continuity Team (ACT) to ensure continuity and to expedite decision-making related to COVID-19. This team meets regularly and is divided into four subgroups: Operations; Government Support; Communications and Secretariat; and Business and Workforce.

Their work includes the review and adaptation of training methods, fire crew response, staff travel, fire camp accommodations and hygiene protocols, resource tracking systems, wildfire prevention and related prohibitions, and more.

They are considering all guidelines and recommendations made by the Provincial Health Officer.

The BC Wildfire Service's goals related to its staff and COVID-19 include:

- keeping staff members informed;
- reducing the risk of staff exposure to COVID-19;
- maintaining a supportive, healthy and resilient workforce; and
- adapting our operations and our response to risk, as necessary.

As a result of the COVID-19 situation, some project and public engagement work that BCWS had committed to complete in 2020 may:

- proceed using a different method;
- be postponed or re-scheduled; or
- be halted for the foreseeable future.

Details of any changes to project and engagement work will be provided to affected groups. The BC Wildfire Service remains focused on ensuring it's ready to respond to wildfires and other land-based emergencies, while maintaining the safety and well-being of firefighting crews and all other staff members.

# Wildfire NEWS

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### At Coastal

Wildfires respond strongly to weather influences, and the current period of cool wet weather has lowered the fire danger considerably since the Magee fire started only three weeks ago. There were no new fires on the Coast in the last week.

Lightning storms passed overnight Wednesday from Abbotsford to Whistler, and from Lake Cowichan to Bowser on the island, but no new fires have been detected from those strikes yet. This may change as the forests dry over the weekend, and we ask people to report any new fires to \*5555 or 1 800 663-5555.

Another option for reporting and following wildfires is now available. A new BC Wildfire Service mobile app is available from Google Play or the Apple App store. Users of this app can use the fire reporting tool, view real-time information about wildfires, and search for fires by their location.

As we move into drier and warmer weather, we wish to remind people that all open fire, except campfires, are prohibited throughout BC within our jurisdictional areas. People can report illegal burning or wildfires through the methods above.

Those choosing to undertake campfire are cautioned to do so carefully. The very warm, dry weather this weekend is expected to come with wind, which can make a fire escape grow quickly.

### Weather



**SYNOPSIS: (Today-tomorrow)** Today will run a few degrees warmer than yesterday with afternoon highs probably reaching mid to high 20s. More importantly, the relative humidity last night only recovered to the 50 to 60 per cent range—in the main valleys—and with the afternoon heat, many valleys will see readings dropping to the 15 to 20 per cent range and a few will fall to 10 per cent! Another clear cool night coming up and by morning the outflow gradient increases again and some stations will see northeast winds in the 15 to 20 km/h range. Temperatures Saturday ramp up to the high 20s and perhaps we see a few 30 degree readings. Afternoon humidities again drop into the 10 to 20 per cent range.

**OUTLOOK: (Sunday-Tuesday)** The ridge weakens on Sunday allowing some high cloudiness but no rainfall at all. Temperatures remain well above normal and afternoon humidity quite low. The outflow winds in the morning at 15 to 20 km/h likely fall off to the 10 to 15 range but remain a northeasterly outflow. There is some chance of below 10 per cent relative humidity readings. The ridge further weakens Monday, temperatures fall a few degrees and humidity rises. Winds likely peak Monday morning as the pressure gradient tightens due to an approaching low pressure centre.

### Contact Information

**Report a Wildfire: \*5555 on a cell or 1 800 663-5555**

**Wildfire Information Line: 1 888 3FOREST**

**Burn Registration Number: 1 888 797-1717**

**Information Officer Phone Number: 250-951-4209**

**Information Officer Email:**

[BCWS.CoFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCWS.CoFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca)



## New Mobile App Now Available

The official BC Wildfire Service mobile app is now available, providing real-time wildfire information and an interactive map that users can customize to display a variety of fire related data. It is free to download in the App Store and Google Play.

For further details about the BC Wildfire Service mobile app, refer to the online reference guide: <http://ow.ly/dZkr30qDdfM>



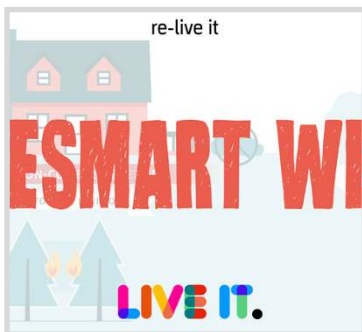
## FireSmart BC

To effectively reduce wildfire risk, it is important that the public gain a better understanding of what it means to be FireSmart. Check out FireSmart BC's amazing resources online:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/firesmartbc/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BCFireSmart>

Website: [FireSmartbc.ca](https://firesmartbc.ca)



## Livelt

The BC Wildfire Service has partnered with [Livelt](https://www.liveit.earth/firesmart-week) for [#FireSmart Week](https://www.liveit.earth/firesmart-week)! Re-live this amazing event and check out their website to learn about forest ecology and how to increase the resiliency of your home in the event of a wildfire.

<https://www.liveit.earth/firesmart-week>



## Interactive Map Updated Symbolology

On April 15, 2020, the BC Wildfire Service made changes to how wildfire information is displayed on the Public Interactive BC Wildfire Dashboard. Fires will now be displayed on the map by their stage of control.

[Interactive Map Reference Guide.](#)

[Interactive Map.](#)