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To obtain copies of the FireSmart Homeowner's Manual to share with your community go to: <https://firesmartbc.ca/resource-ordering-form/>.

FireSmart Discipline: Legislation and Planning



The FireSmart discipline “legislation and planning” is about developing or making changes to policy and legislation to effectively deal with: forestry management practices; integrated land use planning; compliance and enforcement programs; and fire-related legal orders.

In 2018, the province experienced another historic wildfire season, with over 1.3 million hectares burned and about 28,100 individuals evacuated. Wildfire suppression costs were nearly \$600 million.

About 93 legal orders were issued throughout B.C. in 2018 due to fire activity and fire-related conditions. About 83% of those orders were issued in the southern portion of the province to address the changing needs of the fire centres in those regions. Given the significant fire activity experienced during the months of July, August and September, legal orders were put in place to restrict open burning; restrict certain activities and the use of specific equipment, restrict public access within active fire areas; and implement full backcountry closures.

In the Coastal Fire Centre, 10 legal orders were written in 2018, including restrictions on open burning. In addition, one evacuation alert and one evacuation order were issued by local governments for a wildfire near Nanaimo Lakes.

Planning is a large component of the legislation and planning discipline. When BC Wildfire Service staff propose modifications to legislation or policy, they need to make a good argument for why such changes are necessary. This means that data is required to support its recommended changes to the *Wildfire Act* or the *Wildfire Regulation*, or for policy changes.

Below are two of the tools used for fire-related planning and for mitigating wildfire threats:

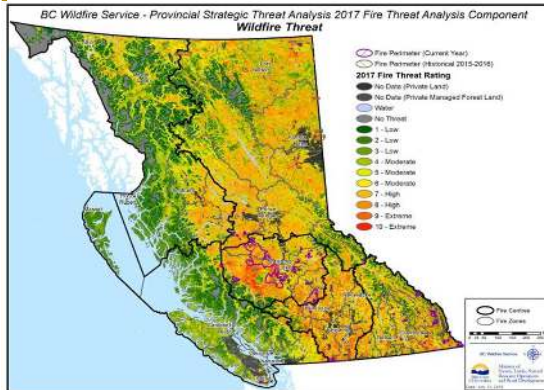
1) Fire-related **finances and penalties** were increased on April 1, 2016 to reflect a growing concern about irresponsible behaviour that

could spark wildfires. These increased fines would not have been approved if the BC Wildfire Service had not been able to prove that (typically) most wildfires in the Coastal Fire Centre are human-caused. For a summary of these fines, go to: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/governance/legislation-regulations/summary-of-fines>

2) The **Provincial Strategic Threat Assessment** is designed to consistently evaluate and map potential wildfire threats to values on the landscape, such as communities, infrastructure and natural resources. The Provincial Strategic Threat Assessment offers local governments, private landowners, industry and other stakeholders an opportunity to:

- review threat ratings in their areas of interest
- assess how much fire prevention work has been done in those areas (e.g. FireSmart activities or fuel management treatments)
- determine what additional steps they could take to safeguard their interests

Downloadable files related to the 2019 Provincial Strategic Threat Assessment can be found at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/vegetation-and-fuel-management/fire-fuel-management/psta>



Values - refer to natural resources or man-made structures or features that have a measurable or intrinsic worth and could be negatively impacted by wildfires.

The Role of a Natural Resource Officer

British Columbia's Natural Resource Officers (NROs) operate out of the Compliance and Enforcement Branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. They enforce natural resource legislation throughout the province and play a key role during the wildfire season.

Natural Resource Officers visit wildfire sites and work closely with fire origin and cause investigators, who determine the causes of those blazes. If there is any indication that a wildfire was caused by human activity, that triggers an investigation.

Natural Resource Officers use their unique investigative skills to gather evidence. This may involve interviewing witnesses, analyzing materials from the site and taking other actions in cooperation with fire origin and cause investigators. After compiling the evidence, NROs decide whether there is reason to believe that a person or a party of interest has contravened British Columbia's *Wildfire Act*. If so, they present their case at a hearing and a delegated decision-maker will decide on a penalty for the contravention.

Natural Resource Officers play a vital role in holding members of the public and industry personnel accountable for their actions. Their investigations can result in the recovery of firefighting costs for the Province, which are often very significant. In 2016, for example, the Beatton Airport Road fire (G80046) was investigated by Natural Resource Officers. The subsequent hearing, based on their evidence, determined that the Province was owed \$15.8 million in direct firefighting costs and loss of resource values.



The work of Natural Resource Officers also deters irresponsible activity, preventing dangerous fires from starting in the first place. Wildfire prevention is extremely important to the Compliance and Enforcement Branch. By making people who start fires accountable for their actions, NROs send a clear message that unsafe fire activities will not be tolerated in British Columbia.

To learn more about the Compliance and Enforcement Branch and Natural Resource Officers, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/natural-resource-law-enforcement/natural-resource-officers>

You may be able to meet your local Natural Resource Officers at trade shows and community events. You'll recognize them by their dark green and black uniforms.



If you witness or are aware of a natural resource violation, please do one of the following:

- Fill out a violation report form at: <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hen/nrv/report.htm>
- Call the Natural Resource Violation reporting line at 1 877 952-7277
- Or contact your local police detachment.



Why the Build-Up Index is Used to Implement Prohibitions

A team of BC Wildfire Service staff was formed in 2017 to determine the most efficient and consistent measurement for determining when to implement or rescind a campfire prohibition. The team found that the build-up index (BUI) is the most effective indicator.

The build-up index represents a combination of the duff moisture code (DMC) and the drought code (DC) and indicates the total amount of fuel available to a spreading wildfire.

There are some key advantages to using the BUI. It doesn't fluctuate as much as some other measurements, it factors in seasonal drought conditions, it's monitored daily, it provides a stable framework for decision-makers, and it takes weather into account over an extended period of time.

BC Wildfire Service staff who decide when and where open burning prohibitions should be implemented also consider a variety of other factors (including current and forecasted wildfire activity) before making the decision to implement a legal order to restrict open burning. The decision may be based on a number of factors, including (but not limited to): forest fuel conditions; current and anticipated wildfire activity; the availability of fire control resources (including fire crews, equipment and aircraft); concerns for public safety and the safety of first responders; restricting access to areas where public safety may be a concern (Wildfire Act—Section 11); and forecasted weather.

A prevention project team is currently reviewing the use of the

BUI, and/or other factors for implementing larger Category 2 and Category 3 open fire prohibitions (date-driven implementations of Category 3 open burning prohibitions will be evaluated as well). While prohibitions are enacted using science-based parameters, this project allows the team to determine if the measurements used are the most effective and will allow them to fine tune the process.

The prevention project team will also review the use of BUI thresholds for making campfire prohibition decisions this year and, if necessary, amend the criteria for the 2020 fire season.

Using the build-up index to decide when and where to implement Category 2 and Category 3 open burning prohibitions has some specific advantages:

- Using this method considers conditions over an extended period of time and therefore limits how many times a particular prohibition would be enacted and rescinded within a single fire season.
- Using this method makes it easier for people to understand the mechanics of enacting a open burning prohibition, including those who help enforce those legal orders.
- It establishes a more consistent process for implementing open burning prohibitions in all six of the province's fire centres.

As with campfire prohibitions, experience and expertise also factor into the decision-making process for Category 2 and Category 3 open burning prohibitions.

Prevention Blog By Alan Berry, Senior Wildfire Officer—Prevention

A few weeks ago at my local gas station, which also happens to sell fireworks, I overheard an employee reminding a customer who had an armful of fireworks that they should make sure "to point them away from the forest because it's dry out."

I advised both of them that the Coastal Fire Centre has restricted the use of fireworks (including firecrackers) since noon on May 27, 2019. I further explained that while there are places that have local bylaws to manage the use of fireworks, most rural communities don't have fireworks bylaws and so they default to the Coastal Fire Centre's restriction on their use.

The customer's response surprised me: "How can fireworks be prohibited if there isn't a campfire ban?"

I explained that the use of fireworks — along with sky lanterns, binary exploding targets, burn barrels, and burning cages — are included in a Category 2 open fire (backyard burning) prohibition as restricted activities. I further explained that the BC Wildfire Service website has a list of all current open fire prohibitions and restrictions (listed by fire centre) and shared the link: www.bcwildfire.ca

Every year, I find it interesting that some people don't really feel that the wildfire season has started until a campfire ban is put in place. People need to be vigilant about wildfire prevention whenever the conditions warrant it. Implementing a campfire prohibition is just one of many precautions that are taken as the wildfire risk increases.

For the record, the customer at the gas station still bought the fireworks but promised to wait until they were no longer restricted before setting them off. I hope that's true, because the fine for failing to comply with an order restricting the use of fireworks is \$1,150. The person responsible may also be held liable for fire suppression costs and damage to Crown and/or private property, which can run into the millions.

**Fires to Date
Since
April 1, 2019**

Total	116
Lightning	35
Person	80
Undetermined	1

**Number of fires
since
July 26, 2019**

Total	12
Lightning	0
Person	12

**Fire Danger
Rating today**



**Current Prohibitions
(within BCWS
jurisdictional area)**

**Category 2 Open
Fire Prohibition
throughout the
Coastal Fire
Centre's
jurisdictional area.**

**Campfire and
Category 3
prohibitions have
not yet been
implemented.**

**Go to
BCWildfire.ca for
the latest
information.**

Coastal Fire Centre

**Wildfire
news**

At Coastal

Sakinaw Lake—V51270 . Size: 3.8 hectares. Status: Under Control.
Cause: Suspected human-caused. Reported: August 5, 2019.
Resources: 5 personnel. This fire is now 100% contained and is being mopped up.

Mount Matheson—V61318. Size: 0.6 hectares. 4 BCWS firefighters assisted the East Sooke Fire Department on August 8, 2019.

A campfire prohibition has not been enacted but senior officers continue to monitor conditions closely. We ask everyone to continue to be diligent and want to thank everyone for contributing to the low number of fire starts over the August long weekend. Responsible campers know where, and when, to have a campfire; as well as the importance of putting them out! Completely out!

There were 12 abandoned campfires reported by patrols over the August long weekend.

You may see some new signs adjacent to some human-caused fires. BC Wildfire Service has produced the signs and will be posting them, where appropriate, to point out what fires were preventable. The QR Code takes you to the online Natural Resource Violation Reporting form where you can offer any information you have about the fire.



UNDER INVESTIGATION

This human-caused wildfire was preventable.

YEAR: _____ FIRE NUMBER: _____

Please report any information related to this wildfire to:

- NATURAL RESOURCE VIOLATION REPORTING**
- Toll-free: 1 877 952-7277
 - Cellphone: #7277
 - Online at: <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hen/nrv/report.htm>



Visit bcwildfire.ca to learn more about wildfire prevention.

Weather

SYNOPSIS: (Today-tomorrow) Several significant developments overnight make this a very difficult forecast. First, as expected, extensive marine cloud layers formed and this morning sees widespread overcast skies and patchy drizzle. All zones are involved and will see afternoon temperatures as much as ten degrees cooler than lately. Secondly, a large convective complex, with lightning and locally heavy showers, formed over central Washington after midnight and is now drifting north-west towards the Lower Mainland. Showers are already reported at Abbotsford; lightning was reported at Bellingham earlier. With the cooler temperatures today it is very difficult to say whether thunderstorms including lightning are likely today as normally the lightning trigger is the warmer afternoon temperature readings. Still, the local motion of the observed cloud mass indicates shower activity moving into all southern zones later today and a few locally heavy showers are almost certain. Model forecasts show further southerly flow bringing more showers and possible thunderstorms tonight and again all day Saturday. Temperatures remain very cool and humidity very high. Locally heavy showers

may be accompanied by gusty winds.

OUTLOOK: (Sunday-Tuesday) An upper trough sits over southern BC this weekend and next week and maintains cool cloudy occasionally wet conditions.

CONFIDENCE/DISCUSSION: At the moment the best forecast is just to be watching the live satellite and radar imagery as well as Dispatch and the lightning display. The early morning computer model forecast still does not show the local heavy rainfall currently reported over central and northern Washington so can not be trusted to indicate potential rainfall for the Coastal zones. As of time of issue the lightning appears to have faded out over Washington and if it is to reach southern BC it may not be until this afternoon.

6 TO 10 DAY: (next week) The upper low and or trough persists all next week bringing more cool cloudy sometimes wet weather.