

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Coastal Fire Centre Dispatch
- Community Resiliency Investment
- Role of the RWCO
- Dispatching for the BCWS
- Coastal News
- Fire Weather Forecast
- 2020 Contact Information

### CURRENT STATISTICS

Fires to-date: 60

Hectares burned: 241

Human-caused: 53

Lightning-caused: 7

### BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

**Campfire:** No Ban

**Category 2:** Prohibited throughout

**Category 3:** Prohibited throughout except for Haida Gwaii

**Forest Use Restrictions:** No Ban

Fireworks, sky lanterns, binary exploding targets, burn barrels and air curtain burners are also prohibited.

*See the [Prohibitions section of bcwildfire.ca](http://bcwildfire.ca) for full details.*

## Coastal Fire Centre Dispatch

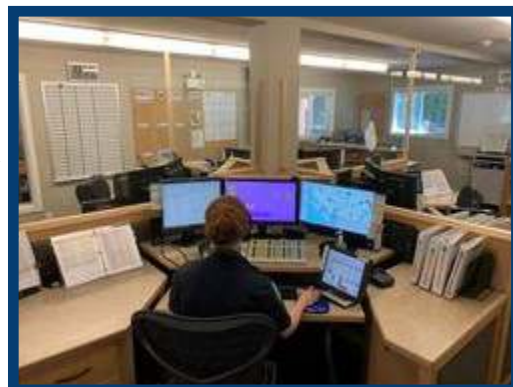
Submitted by Kaitlin Pace, Dispatcher

The Coastal Fire Centre employs up to nine Radio Dispatchers during the summer months. Their job is to act as a communication link between the general public, field operations and Regional Wildfire Coordination Centres.

A Dispatchers day can be slow, filled with routine tasks and safety check-ins, then abruptly shift to being fast paced with multiple demands, interruptions and critical requests. On a busy day of Wildfire Dispatching; a Dispatcher will typically receive a report of fire (ROF) which comes through as an alert on a map or by the phone. They then take the information provided and disseminate it up the chain of command to the Operations Chief or Regional Wildfire Coordination Officer (RWCO). Every scenario is unique, and Dispatchers respond according to what action is directed to them by the Operations Chief. If there is a fire that requires the response of a fire crew the Dispatcher will call the crew leader, provide all relevant information including the location of the fire, directions and what the fire behaviour is reported to be. Once crews are en route, Dispatchers provide safety monitoring and continue to be the communication link between crews on the fireline and Operations.

Radio Dispatchers at the Coastal Fire Centre conduct 20,041 safety check-ins for ministry staff (not part of BC Wildfire Service) and respond to an average of 201 fires every year.

This role is integral to supporting all personnel working throughout the 16.8 million hectares of land in the Coastal Fire Centre that is home to approximately 85% of the population of BC.



## Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program

**Applications are currently being accepted for the 2021 program. The application deadline is October 9, 2020.**

The Community Resiliency Investment program is intended to reduce the risk of wildfires and mitigate their impacts on BC communities.

CRI includes two streams: FireSmart Community Funding & Supports administered by UBCM, and Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction administered by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development.

B.C is expanding its criteria for the Community Resiliency Investment program grants after feedback from Indigenous communities and local governments.

The grants fund eligible wildfire risk reduction projects in the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports category.

Changes to the program's criteria will take effect for 2021 applicants and will include:

- Regional districts may now submit a single application for eligible, collaborative FireSmart projects that include multiple electoral areas. The maximum base funding (i.e., \$50,000 or \$150,000, depending on the demonstrated wildfire risk) may be increased by up to \$50,000 for each electoral area included in the application.
- The grant amount for eligible applicants facing a lower wildfire risk has been increased from a maximum of \$25,000 to a maximum of \$50,000.
- The new Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan supplemental instruction guide and template are now available to help communities assess wildfire risks and guide their risk reduction activities. The new template is a result of a comprehensive review of the government's approach to community wildfire resiliency planning, conducted by the BC FireSmart Committee and the BC Wildfire Service.

### 2021 FireSmart Community Funding & Supports

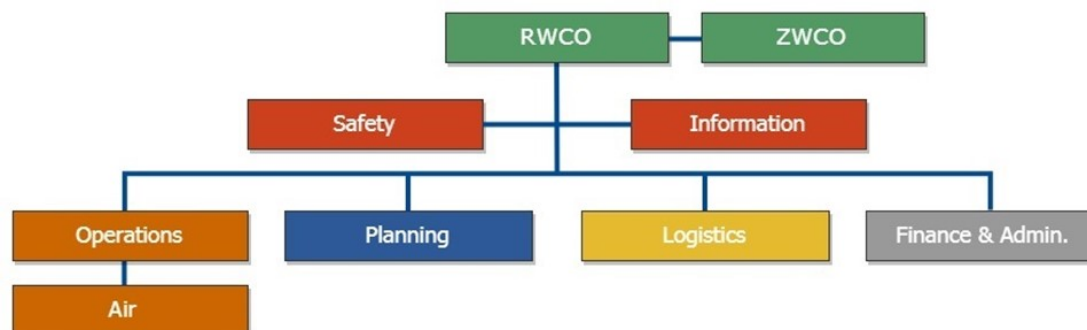
Applications are now being accepted. The application deadline is October 9, 2020.

- [2021 Program & Application Guide \[PDF - 491 KB\]](#)
- [2021 Application Form \[DOCX - 51 KB\]](#)
- [2021 Worksheet 1: Proposed Activities and Cost Estimates \[DOCX - 67 KB\]](#)
- [2021 Worksheet 2: Fuel Management Activities \[DOCX - 57 KB\]](#)
- [2020 Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan \(CWRP\) Template \[DOCX - 144 KB\]](#)
- [2020 CWRP Supplemental Instruction Guide \[PDF - 979 KB\]](#)
- [2020 BC Wildfire Service Fuel Management Prescription Guidance](#)
- 2020 BC Wildfire Service Wildfire Threat Assessment Guide - will be available soon

For more information go to: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/funding-for-wildfire-prevention>.

## The Role of the Regional Wildfire Coordination Officer (RWCO)

The BC Wildfire Service employs a wide variety of staff, both seasonal and full-time. Typically, the most recognizable BCWS employees are the firefighters in their “reds and blues,” but there are many others behind the scenes who make it possible for crews and field staff to combat wildfires. Firefighters rely heavily on these “support staff,” as they are an integral part of firefighting operations. Support staff work in their regular positions at either the fire centre or in a fire zone, however they also function in different roles as a part of the Incident Command System when the need arises. Support staff range from dispatchers to Information Officers to the Regional Wildfire Coordination Officer (RWCO). In this article we delve into the realm of the RWCO and learn more about what they do.



You may have heard about the RWCO before, but why is this position so important? The RWCO is responsible for directing a response to all reported wildfires within the fire centre. This includes sending resources to the fireline, but also evaluating the need for support staff in areas such as dispatch, information, operations, aviation, plans and logistics. The organizational chart above demonstrates this relationship. Once there is potential for a wildfire to ignite, the RWCO will be on duty. As more wildfires start, they will be on call 24 hours a day. Wildfire preparedness is multifaceted and includes ensuring that there are enough of and the right type of resources available to respond to a fire given the current conditions.

The RWCO must take into consideration many factors that contribute to the likelihood that a wildfire will ignite, but also the possible spread and intensity of a fire. Weather forecasters evaluate and report daily weather conditions to the RWCO who will use this information as a tool to assist them in making their decisions regarding resource allocation and preparedness. Elements such as temperature, precipitation levels, humidity, wind, and fuel conditions are closely analyzed. Other considerations for the preparedness level may be the time of year.

## The Role of the RWCO (Cont)

For example, in the summer months, many people engage in open burning, and spend more time in the outdoors, having campfires and using ATVs. All these activities can and do cause wildfires. Long weekends with hot, dry weather conditions are of particular concern for fire starts. In order to reduce the risk of a wildfire during such conditions, the RWCO may make recommendations on when to implement open fire restrictions.

The RWCO maintains relationships within and between ministries, emergency response agencies and industry. They prioritize critical resource allocation, coordinate wildfire strategies, ensure effective allocation of resources, and maintain preparedness to ensure appropriate wildfire response. Each fire centre has a roster of RWCOs who will rotate on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The Provincial Wildfire Coordination Officer (PWCO) oversees resource allocation and fire preparedness for the entire province.

Resources such as a fire crews, water tenders, heavy equipment, air tankers and officers may be placed on standby across the zones of the fire centre depending on the fire risk and operational need as determined by the RWCO. These decisions are based off not only the level of anticipated fire activity in the fire centre but also the fire activity in the rest of the province. There are six fire centres in B.C., each broken down further into several fire zones. Coordinated by the PWCO, the RWCOs from each fire centre maintain communication to collaborate the allocation of resources across the province, as the need for resources may be greater in one area of the province than another.

The RWCO is also responsible to ensure the flow of external communication is maintained. Not only do they chair all briefings regarding preparedness, they also approve all media releases and ensure timely and clear communication with stakeholders, First Nations, local government and other agencies.

The position of RWCO can be very demanding but also is very rewarding. These individuals are responsible for ensuring that the entire fire centre is prepared to respond to wildfires and are often required to make quick and strategic decisions in response to rapidly evolving situations. They contribute a wide range of valuable experience to the BCWS.

## Dispatching for BC Wildfire Service

### The Communications Hub

Dispatchers are employed at each of the province's six fire centres. They provide the communication link between the wildfire coordination centres, aircraft and personnel in the field, and they implement pre-approved fire control decisions. Dispatchers must be able to stay calm and focused in emergency situations, know how to multitask effectively, have good written and verbal communication skills, be a team player, and be willing to work extended periods with minimal time off during the summer.

Dispatchers have processes in place that allow them to receive a smoke or fire report, dispatch crews and officers to an incident, and compile updates and receive requests for fire fighting resources, all while passing along key pieces of information and inputting data into the Personnel Resource Tracking (PRT) system. PRT is the main program used in the dispatch room to input all information and keep track of the resources out in the field. While collecting pertinent data about a fire by phone or radio, the dispatcher also checks to confirm the jurisdiction where the fire is burning. It may be in a park (federal or provincial), a local fire department's jurisdiction, on Crown land, in a watershed or a myriad of other possibilities.

If it is a forest fire, the dispatcher checks for hazards or landmarks and determines what resources may be in the area, including aircraft. If a plane or helicopter is sent in, the dispatcher is responsible for making sure that all other aircraft are aware of the incoming aircraft.

One of the more difficult tasks for a dispatcher is dealing with fire-related injuries. In an emergency, dispatchers may assist by calling for an ambulance, police, or search and rescue personnel. They may also work with Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) as required.

Dispatchers play an instrumental role in wildland firefighting, even though their work is rarely seen by the public. The dispatcher is the primary link between operations staff and firefighters in the field. As much as fire fighting is about having "boots on the ground," clear communication is essential to carry out a solid, well-choreographed operation.

### Fire Weather Forecast

A thunderstorm warning has been issued Friday for all zones and a fire behaviour warning and advisory is also issued.

**SYNOPSIS:** (Today-tomorrow) The large ridge over southern BC the last few days is drifting east allowing an unstable southerly stream to move up over Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. As the unstable stream erupted last night near Port Renfrew and pushed north through Nanoose Bay before dawn and then across to Powell river by daybreak it brought a narrow band of thunderstorms and lightning. Radar shows locally heavy but small rain showers with the thunderstorms but very little rain has been recorded in the gauges, so it appears most of the lightning strikes are dry. So far, no strong winds have been reported but of course locally gusty conditions are always possible near convective storms. The warm south upper winds will maintain well above normal temperatures today but there are also pockets of instability in the flow and thunderstorms are possible all day in all zones with the possible exception of Haida Gwaii. Afternoon highs may run a few degrees cooler than yesterday and humidity will be a little higher but values are still high enough to generate advisory fire behaviour conditions in the more volatile fuel types of the eastern zones areas as well as central Vancouver Island. Tomorrow sees the upper winds turn back to the southwest bringing cooling and increased moisture but little or no shower activity. For the most part it will be sunny Saturday.

**OUTLOOK:** (Sunday-Tuesday) The offshore upper trough crosses the fire centre on Sunday with considerable shower activity expected for the outer coasts, northern and parts of central Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast north of Sechelt. Southern and eastern sections remain mostly sunny and warm but not as hot. Showers ease up Monday as the next ridge builds and all areas return to sunny warm weather by Tuesday.

#### FireSmart

For some great information about FireSmart Testimonials go to:

<https://firesmartbc.ca/resource-types/video/>

### Coastal News

Rising temperatures and lower humidity has increased the likelihood of fire starts throughout the fire centre. On the afternoon of July 29 the Coastal Fire Centre responded to several fires, and crews were able to respond quickly and hold these fires at 0.1 of a hectare or less. Three of the fires occurred on the east side of Vancouver Island between Shawnigan Lake and Parksville.

Thursday evening and Friday morning saw a narrow band of lightning trail over the Coastal Fire Centre. Crews are presently responding to seven known fires from this storm, and more are expected to be detected in the coming days.

People enjoying forests over the long weekend are asked to be careful to prevent wildfires. The Coastal Fire Centre has issued a prohibition against all open fire larger than a 0.5 metre by 0.5 metre campfire within it's jurisdictional area. People having a small campfire must stay beside them, have a means to put them out, and to fully extinguish them—cold to the touch—before they leave their campsites.

We also ask for help reporting fires: please report columns of smoke promptly, to help us triangulate in on their location.

### 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)