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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: Interagency Cooperation



FireSmart's "inter-agency cooperation" discipline helps identify opportunities to better support wildfire preparedness, prevention, response and recovery more broadly across government. Although the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) works with many external agencies, stakeholders and First Nations, it also relies on the expertise of various agencies within the provincial government.

BCWS works closely with the Compliance and Enforcement Branch (CEB) of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) and with the Conservation Officer Service (COS) of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy on investigations, compliance and enforcement activities, and legal actions authorized under the Wildfire Act and Wildfire Regulation.

The duties and responsibilities conferred on BCWS staff are restricted to the provisions of the Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act, the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Wildfire Act. To fulfill those duties and responsibilities, BCWS relies on COS and CEB assistance.

COS is guided by its law enforcement mandate under the Environmental Management Act, as well as authorities established by appointments and designations under provincial and federal statutes.

CEB is a part of FLNRORD's Integrated Resource Operations division. Its Natural Resource Officers (NROs) have the authority to enforce many statutes. The Natural Resource Compliance Act and Regulation specifies which pieces of legislation the NROs are authorized to enforce. They include the Land Act, Forest and Range Practices Act, Heritage Conservation Act, Wildfire Act and Wildfire Regulation.

Part of BCWS's mandate is to identify human-caused fires, look at whether a contravention of the Wildfire Act or the Wildfire Regulation has occurred, and pursue compensation for:

- the cost of suppressing a fire,
- and/or damage to Crown values,
- and/or monetary penalties (where warranted).

The BC Wildfire Service is responsible for conducting Fire Origin and Cause (FOC) determinations on all human-caused fires.

Members of the COS have expertise in all aspects of investigations, including (but not limited to): securing and collecting evidence, conducting interviews, obtaining forensic analysis of exhibits, writing investigation reports, and providing testimony in court.

Natural resource district land managers also play a key role, since they support the development of Response Fire Management Plans within their jurisdictions. This information is made available to the BC Wildfire Service, which can then make decisions based on these plans.

Local governments, including First Nations, work diligently to protect their lands and their people. Funding from the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program and the Forest Enhancement Society of British Columbia (FESBC) supports strong, co-operative relationships as local governments implement wildfire risk reduction plans and conduct FireSmart training within their communities. This work often relies on resources, information and co-ordination assistance provided by the BC Wildfire Service.

BCWS has also established strong working relationships with other stakeholders, including: the federal government; professional groups such as the Association of BC Forest Professionals; businesses; societies (e.g. the BC FireSmart Committee); and a host of other organizations.

Due diligence requires BCWS to work cooperatively with any organization or government to provide professional expertise as needed and to use the best available information from others that the BCWS serves.

North Island Complex 2018

On Aug. 10, 2018, a lightning storm rolled across parts of the Coastal Fire Centre, impacting a large area of remote terrain with lightning strikes but no precipitation. As a result of that storm, 63 wildfires ignited on northern Vancouver Island and 18 were discovered on the mainland in the mid-coast area.

Our response was aided by preparations that we had made the previous spring. Through a process known as “pre-organization”, many people in other parts of the ministry were available help if the need arose. An inventory of these people (as well as details about their training and experience) created a deep pool of people we could call upon. The local fire zone had also contacted larger forest industry companies to find out what kind of equipment and personnel they had available. A tentative agreement was hammered out, along with a list of contact numbers and expectations if their help was required. This agreement was a key part of our success on Vancouver Island last summer.

At the same time, many communities elsewhere in the province were experiencing large fires that were threatening homes and livelihoods. The other fire centres sent what resources they could to the Coastal Fire Centre, while maintaining enough resources to respond to anticipated wildfires in their own jurisdictions.

On Aug. 9, 2018 (a day before the lightning storm rolled in), the Coastal Fire Centre’s weather forecaster had predicted a high chance of lightning in the area. The track of the storm was pretty much what had been expected.

Firefighting personnel, aircraft and other resources had been placed on standby in anticipation of the storm. As more and more fires were detected by staff, pilots, boaters and other members of the public, more resources were mobilized to help out.

A Ministry Zone Operating Centre (MZOC) was established at the existing Quinsam zone office just outside of Campbell River. The cluster of wildfires was named the North Island Complex and the area of MZOC responsibility was defined. Control of the airspace around the fires was established with the arrival of experienced dispatchers who could monitor the safety and movement of aircraft and personnel. People working on the North Island Complex were guided locally, with input from staff who knew the area intimately. As fires were detected, guidance provided by the BC Emergency Management System Response (BCEMS) Goals were followed:

1. Ensure the health and safety of responders;
2. Save lives;
3. Reduce suffering;

4. Protect public health;
5. Protect infrastructure;
6. Protect property;
7. Protect the environment;
8. Reduce economic and social losses.

Many of these wildfires were burning in very steep terrain (some on cliff faces) and firefighters’ activities were limited to where they could safely work. This impacted Goal #1. Some fires threatened road and power supplies, impacting Goals 2, 3, 4 and 5. Some of the fires could have impacted recreation sites (Goal 6) or endangered species habitat (Goal 7), and some threatened logging assets (Goal 8).

Each fire was assessed in terms of where it was, where it could spread, what it could impact, and how soon that impact could happen. The fires were then added to a list, in priority order, for crews to work on. As

fires were controlled, they were moved off the list. Existing fires were monitored regularly and their priority rankings were raised or lowered as appropriate.

The Coastal Fire Centre also reached out to its contacts in the local forest industry. They rose to the challenge by sending staff, equipment and management representatives to help fuse the world of complex fire response with their operational knowledge. Their detailed knowledge of terrain, forests and forestry roads in the area helped with the BC Wildfire Service’s decision-making. Many of the fires were responded to by forest industry personnel who had the appropriate training and experience to keep staff safe, while also launching an effective fire response.

This approach required some personnel to be moved to a fire camp in Woss. Travel by road was long and convoluted because of the many deep inlets and mountain ridges in the region. Aircraft time was valuable, so it was imperative to keeping travel times for crews and equipment short.

Many of the fires were categorized as “held”, “under control” or “out” due to the hard work of crews. Many more fires in remote areas were extinguished when the long-anticipated coastal rains finally arrived. The entire region was assessed again this spring to see if any of the 2018 fires had managed to burn through the winter, but no active fires were found.



Woss Camp

Fire Departments

The BC Wildfire Service's firefighters are trained and equipped to respond to fires composed of wildland fuels and vegetation. They are not trained or equipped to deal with structure fires (e.g. fires in residential buildings) and structure protection.

Structure firefighters, on the other hand, are trained to control and extinguish fires in structures. Some structure firefighters have training and/or equipment to help suppress wildfires, but not all of them do.

Recognizing that both wildland and structure firefighting expertise are needed to respond effectively to Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) fires, an agreement was reached to formalize the nature of that co-operation — called the Inter-agency Operation Procedures.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner, the Fire Chiefs' Association of B.C. and the BC Wildfire Service have clearly defined the operational procedures required during wildfire incidents that involve structures. The agreement sets out how the parties will cooperate and communicate, and also addresses compensation and jurisdictional issues.

However, the true nature of the relationship is not based on a formal agreement, but on the mutual respect that structure and wildland firefighters have for each other and their roles in protecting the public from harm.

Forest Industry

The Coastal Fire Centre works closely with the forest industry to reduce and mitigate fire hazards in coastal forests.

The forest industry has statutory obligations to monitor forest conditions and only work when it is safe to do so. The industry uses many of the tools available on the BC Wildfire Service's website (e.g. the list of weather station readings).

Forest industry personnel will often contact the local fire zone office when they have questions about the implementation of Category 3 open burning prohibitions or "high-risk activities". The BC Wildfire Service does not interpret legislation, but leaves that to the professional reliance of foresters. (For more information, visit: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/wildfire-status/prevention/prevention-industry-comm-ops/bcws_wildfirereg_interpretivebulletin.pdf).

Another way that BCWS relies on the forest industry is to engage with the forest sector during wildfire incidents. Resources that are useful for fighting wildfires are engaged according to the Forest Sector Agreement and are invaluable to BCWS's success in many instances.

Having everybody working collaboratively during a wildfire event is essential to the safety and security of all.

Prevention Blog

The official first day of summer has come and gone, and I hope that the rain in the forecast will provide a bit of relief for the dry conditions that persist in parts of the Coastal Fire Centre.

Preventable, human-caused wildfires continue to occur throughout the Coastal Fire Centre, although no single cause stands out this year. With continuing dry conditions, there has been a lot of interest in bringing in a campfire prohibition. A few of the BC Wildfire Service's partners have implemented campfire prohibitions within their jurisdictions and we endorse that approach, since they know their local conditions and can enforce their bylaws accordingly.

The Coastal Fire Centre takes a regional approach to campfire prohibitions and multiple factors are considered when assessing wildfire hazards and deciding whether to implement an open fire prohibition, including: current and forecasted weather conditions; the availability of firefighting resources; and the "Buildup Index" (BUI).

The BUI is a numeric rating of the total amount of fuel available for combustion, using a system that accounts for the effects of fuel moisture and wind on fire behaviour. When over 50% of the weather stations within a defined geographic area are expected to surpass the BUI threshold, we review all of the factors that we consider when deciding whether to implement a campfire prohibition.

The good news is that the majority of people who have campfires are following the rules and completely extinguishing their campfires when they're finished using them. This is a good thing, considering that anyone who leaves a campfire unattended for any length of time may be fined up to \$1,150, while anyone whose campfire causes a wildfire may also be subject to a penalty of up to \$100,000 and one year in jail, along with any costs associated with fighting the fire and damages.

Stay Safe,
Alan Berry, Senior Wildfire Officer—Prevention

Fires to Date Since April 1, 2019

Total 73

Lightning 10

Person 63

Number of fires since June 14, 2019

Total 31

Lightning 9

Person 22

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 are being considered, but not implemented yet.

Go to BCWildfire.ca for the latest information.

At Coastal

Cecil Hill (V50714) - this fire was reported on June 25, 2019. The fire is 9 hectares in size and is a Rank 1/2 ground fire burning under the canopy of a densely forested area. Initially 26 firefighters, 6 helicopters and airtanker support were assigned to the fire. This was increased to 47 firefighters on June 26, 2019. The fire burned uphill during the day but crept downhill overnight towards structures. No structures or values have been lost. The status of this fire currently is 'Being Held'.

Port Mellon Highway Fire (V50677) - this fire was reported the afternoon of June 19, 2019. The fire is now listed as 'Under Control' and has been scanned. Crews targeted hotspots identified by the scan and are now patrolling the fire. The status of this fire is 'Under Control'.

Spring Creek Fire (V30699) - Sunday June 23, 2019, a fire located near Strip Creek between Horseshoe Bay and Lions Bay north of Vancouver was reported. The BC Wildfire Service originally estimated the out-of-control blaze to be about three hectares in size but it has since been mapped at 4.18 ha. The fire that is burning up a slope above the Sea to Sky Highway. The fire cause is under investigation. The area where the fire is located is on and near a cliff face which poses a risk due to tumbling debris. The fire posed no risk to structures. The Sea-to-Sky Highway has been impacted; contact DriveBC for more information.

Deployments to Alberta - A total of 114 personnel were deployed to Alberta from the Coastal Fire Centre. This included 17 single resources and 5 unit crews. Almost all of those deployed have returned and are now back at their home bases.



Alberta—Black Spruce (C2 Fuel) Free Burning—areas of aspen would burn then hit a pocket of C2 and torch.

Weather

Issued: 1100PDT Friday 28 June 2018.

SYNOPSIS: (Today-tomorrow) Very complicated pattern this morning: the upper low centre south of Vancouver is filling and becoming a trough as it drifts slowly northeast; showers are falling over the eastern Pemberton and Fraser zones and there is enough instability in the cloud cover that there is a chance of late afternoon thunderstorm development; a return circulation around the far north end of the low is bringing showers to the central Cariboo and will almost certainly see extensive rain bands flow out over the Coast Mountains into Tweedsmuir Park and throughout the Mid-coast and northern Sunshine Coast zones and these showers will be accompanied by a few thunderstorms starting in mid-afternoon. Also, the circulation around the low over southern Vancouver Island is from the west and here it brings some clearing allowing morning sunny periods although the unstable air mass will probably pop up a few late day showers. Tomorrow the low-trough pattern will lie along a line from Kamloops to Victoria and active weather will be found along the north side of the feature: mostly clouds and a few showers. The shower

activity likely dissipates Saturday afternoon to some extent due to a new ridge beginning to build in from the far northwest. Temperatures ramp up a few degrees tomorrow, humidity remains moderate and no more than light winds are expected.

OUTLOOK: (Sunday-Tuesday) The above mentioned ridge continues to strengthen Sunday bringing further clearing and warming. Monday and Tuesday, a continuing northeasterly circulation does bring shower threats to the Coast Mountains especially east of Bella Coola.

6 TO 10 DAY: (next week) A quite weak ridge sits over the north coast next week and a persistent trough holds over the eastern mountains all next week. Very changeable mixed conditions all week with a fair chance of showers moving into the eastern Pemberton and Fraser zones late Tuesday but followed by clearing again Wednesday and then more shower chances Thursday.