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### CURRENT STATISTICS

Fires to-date: 209

Hectares burned: 7097

Human-caused: 170

Lightning-caused: 39

### BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

**Campfire:** No Ban

**Category 2:** No Ban

**Category 3:** No Ban

**Forest Use Restrictions:** No Ban

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

## Fire Season 2021 Review

### Heat dome kicked off a dry summer on the Coast

A combination of drought conditions; a “heat dome” of extreme high pressure that swept through much of the province in late June, 2021; and lightning events throughout B.C. resulted in a very busy fire season for the Coastal Fire Centre. Although the Coastal Fire Centre did not experience the fireload seen elsewhere in British Columbia, the fire centre supported harder hit fire centres—Kamloops, in particular—by exporting numerous staff to the interior.

One of the first notable fires in the Coastal region this year was Eleven Mile Creek, reported on June 20, 2021. This suspected human-caused fire grew to 32 hectares and was located 15 kilometres east of the community of Hope. Following a lightning event at the end of July, 2021, approximately 21 new fires were sparked—once again in the Fraser Zone of the Coastal Fire Centre. Of note: V12262—North end of Long Island fire. This fire on a small island in Harrison Lake resulted in an Evacuation Order for a number of cabins. The fire was mapped at 256 hectares and took approximately three weeks to be brought under control due to prolonged dry conditions and strong winds that prevailed throughout the first two weeks of August in the Fraser zone.

On August 12, 2021 a suspected human-caused blaze was discovered on another Island—Owen’s Bay (V82577) on Sonora Island, 31 kilometres North of Campbell River. This fire resulted in an Evacuation Alert for a number of homes in the immediate vicinity. The fire grew to 5.3 hectares in size, but thanks to a swift initial attack utilizing air tanker support, crews were able to contain the fire to a relatively small footprint.

The final significant fire of 2021—with the most media attention—was the Mt. Hayes fire on Vancouver Island. Initially report in the afternoon of August 19, 2021, the fire grew to 20 hectares by end of day and was estimated at 70 hectares the following morning, due to extremely dry conditions, receptive fuels and strong winds (it was ultimately mapped at 61.5 hectares). The fire was located 4.5 kilometres Northwest of Ladysmith and approximately one kilometre from a Fortis natural gas storage facility. An Evacuation Alert was announced for 20 properties north of the fire on August 20—as well as evacuation orders for the Fortis plant and a nearby fish hatchery. Thanks to extensive helicopter bucketing within the first 48 hours of the fire being reported and strong support from ground crews mounting direct attacks where possible, the fire was brought to being held status by late afternoon on August 22, 2021.

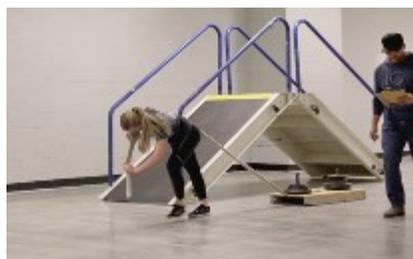
Due to very dry conditions that held for much of the summer, some of these fires remain active today, and could be for some time. It will take extensive precipitation to extinguish the fires smouldering deep under the ground. While fast crew response and air support are crucial, the fire centre relies on the public to report wildfires. Without the support of our vigilant friends and neighbours, some of these fires could have had more serious consequences.

## Getting ready for recruitment

Somehow, as quickly as wildfire season begins, it ends. Airtankers and helicopters no longer line the airstrips. Firefighters roll up their hoses and put away their pulaskis. Dispatch rooms go from buzzing with activity to the only sound being a gentle hum of radio static. Fire centre and zone offices become quieter as auxiliary staff reach the end of their contracts. Although fire activity slows, season wrap-up and preparation for next season keeps full-time staff busy. Beginning in November, applications open to apply for BC Wildfire Service firefighting and dispatching. By February, the screening and interviewing process is underway. Come March and through May, most seasonal positions are activated.

### Firefighting

The recruitment process for firefighting begins with potential candidates completing an online application, which consists of a questionnaire and requires a copy of the applicant's cover letter and resume. All applicants must possess a first aid certificate, which is valid for the duration of the season and is recognized in the B.C. workplace. A valid driver's license is also a requirement for Initial Attack, Parattack and Rappel crews.



Applicants who successfully pass the screening phase will be invited to an interview. The interview consist of a series of behavioral, situational and technical questions related to wildland firefighting in B.C. Candidates must then meet the pre-employment fitness standard, which consists of the nationally recognized [WFX-Fit test](#).

Based on crew member vacancy, top scoring applicants from the interview and fitness assessments will be invited to New Recruit Boot Camp (NRBC). After NRBC, successful candidates will be offered a position on one of the fire crews in the province. A first-year firefighter can expect to work until the end of September with the chance of being offered an extension depending on fire conditions and activity.

In light of the evolving COVID-19 situation, the BC Wildfire Service continues to assess all aspects of the recruiting process and continues to follow Public Health Authority guidelines. Visit the BC Wildfire Service firefighting employment page to learn more.

## Dispatching

Dispatchers can be employed at one of the six fire centres in the province or at the Provincial Air Tanker Centre. To become a dispatcher, applicants must be able to stay calm and focused in emergency situations, know how to multitask effectively and have good written and verbal communication skills. Applicants must also possess a valid drivers license.

After the application deadline, all applications go through an initial screening. Successful applicants will be contacted by email and may have to complete an assessment (e.g. written assignment, typing test, MS Office skills check, etc.) prior to having an interview.



During the interview, applicants must complete a typing test, a radio test and demonstrate their knowledge of the phonetic alphabet. Like the firefighting interview process, the dispatcher interviews consist of behavioural, situational and technical questions. More information about the dispatch position is available on the dispatching employment page.

## Other Positions

A variety of positions with the BC Wildfire Service are available each year to support all functional areas and in several locations throughout B.C. The BC Wildfire Service employs individuals in finance, administration, prevention, aviation and communications to name a few. The recruitment period for these positions varies.



Depending on vacancies, some opportunities may be listed early in the calendar year while others may open throughout the spring or summer. Check the seasonal employment opportunities page frequently to see positions that are currently available and to review job descriptions.

It is the responsibility of candidates to clearly identify on both their resume and application how they meet the preferred qualifications.

Meeting all the preferred qualifications is not required, but an applicant should clearly demonstrate how they meet as many as they can. The BC Wildfire Service is looking for applicants who have a well-rounded set of skills and experiences that demonstrate teamwork, effective problem solving, and hard work.

Before we know it, the places BC Wildfire Service staff spend their time will again be full of dirt and ash, the whir of airtanker and truck engines playing like the soundtrack to their summer. Returning staff will fill the offices and locker rooms and find new faces in these familiar places that have become a second home to many.

## Staff Spotlight: Devin Graham

Over the course of seven days at the beginning of this fire season, the Cariboo Fire Centre in partnership with the T̓silhoqot̓in National Government (TNG) delivered a wildland firefighter training camp for First Nations individuals from the T̓silhoqot̓in communities as well as the community of Ulkatcho. This training camp was a pilot project for the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) and was delivered by the Chilcotin Fire Zone and Ravens Unit Crew at the Puntzi Forward Attack Base.

The overall intent of this initiative was to diminish barriers that limit First Nations representation within BCWS crews and assist the local First Nations communities in building wildfire suppression capacity. The goal was not only to build on overall wildfire response but also strengthen local relationships.

Devin Graham, one of the candidates in the training camp got hired to work on the Ravens Unit Crew this summer. We had a chance to catch up with Devin to chat about how this fire season went for him.



*Devin and crew on the fireline*

### What was the 2021 season like for you?

It was a new experience for me. Right before this opportunity I was a heavy equipment operator, but I decided to do the program last minute. I had never worked as a firefighter before; I had only operated a buncher or excavator in Williams Lake. Coming to the Ravens has been very interesting and I have learned a whole new skill set. In 2017, I ran a buncher around Williams Lake and out in the Chilcotin during the fire season so I knew a little bit about how a wildfire went.

There were a lot of highs this season. I was able to do and see a lot of cool things that I wasn't expecting. Coming into this season, I didn't know what to expect. Our first deployment was to 100 Mile House.

We were at the Canim Lake fire quite a bit. After two weeks at Canim Lake we headed out to the Big Stick Lake fire where we were in an actual camp which was kind of nice. It was cool to see the different country between the two fires. The fuels were a lot flashier and the wildfire moved quicker at the Big Stick Lake fire. We ended up going to Vernon to the White Rock Lake fire after our two weeks at Big Stick Lake. During this deployment we spent the whole time on night shift. It was an interesting fire. The fire was big and a lot of different moving parts. After two weeks there, we went back to Alexis Creek for a reset then headed back to the White Rock Lake fire for another two weeks.

## **Did the training camp prepare you for the season or would have more training been beneficial?**

The training camp definitely helped out because everything I saw on the fireline was seen in the camp. The fire activity was obviously higher during the fire season than what was seen at the camp but I was still able to get a sense of what it would be like. During the camp, there was an actual fire that we went to with the crew. We were not able to do any firefighting but it was neat to watch the process and see the hose lay system being established.

## **What is your favourite memory from the fire season?**

My favourite memory was spending time with the crew! Everyone has been super nice here in Alexis Creek and so easy to get along with. The friends I have made on the Ravens will be lifelong friends. They make me feel like I am at home when I am here at. I met a few of my crew members during the camp so I knew a few of them prior to starting on the crew. I had a choice of where I wanted to work, either in Williams Lake or Alexis Creek and I chose Alexis Creek because I got to know them, and I thought I would try it out. I'm happy with my decision!

## **If the program runs again next year; will you encourage others from your community to participate?**

Oh I definitely would encourage other members from my community to participate. It was eye-opening. I didn't know you could get into so many different things while being in wildfire. I would totally encourage younger people to partake in the program and then see what is out there. If the program runs again next year I would like to help out with it.

## Client satisfaction survey



The BC Wildfire Service has partnered with BC Stats to review communication practices and we would like to hear from you.

By completing this survey you will help us improve the ways we provide information to ensure we're meeting the needs of British Columbians.

To participate, please visit: <http://ow.ly/C4WJ50GozoM>

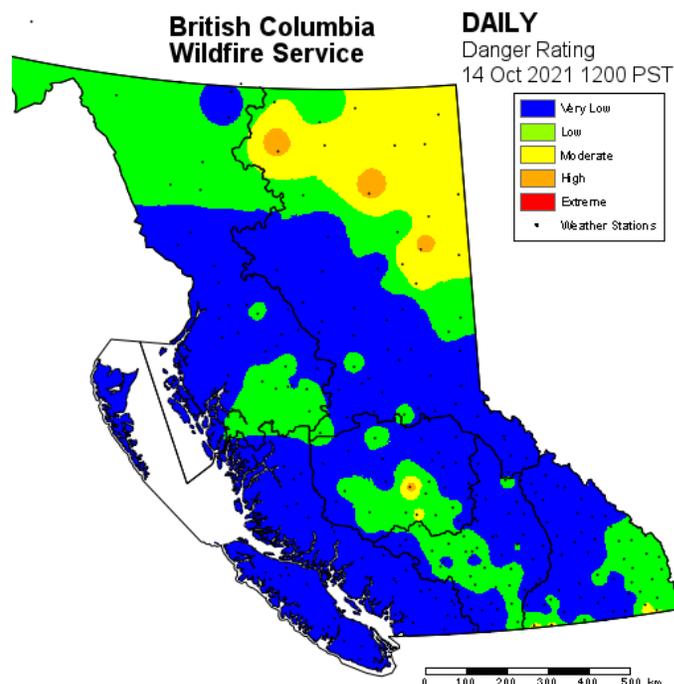
### Coastal Weather 2021 Review

Temperatures across the Coastal Fire Centre during spring 2021 were close to historical averages while precipitation was significantly less than normal, with most weather stations within the Fire Centre only recording 30 to 40 per cent of their normal rainfall. A persistent outflow pattern in mid-April yielded unseasonably low relative humidities and contributed to early season elevated fire behavior across South Coast zones.

An exceptionally strong ridge of high pressure referred to as the “Heat Dome” built over the Coast through the last week of June, pushing temperatures above the 40-degree Celsius mark and breaking countless all-time temperature records across many Coastal sites. The extreme heatwave and ongoing dryness accelerated the drying of fuels, placing many Coastal Fire Centre sites a full month ahead of typical fire weather indices. The ridge breakdown on June 30<sup>th</sup> yielded the biggest lightning day of the summer with 2,545 lightning strikes recorded in the North Island and Mid Coast zones.

Regular and persistent ridges of high pressure over the South Coast continued to provide a dry and warm latter half of summer. Incoming precipitation was often deflected northwards to Haida Gwaii, the Mid Coast and Northern Vancouver Island. The South Island zone was particularly dry this summer with many weather stations reporting record high Build Up Index values by the end of July. Prolonged high pressure also resulted in significantly less lightning in August: 429 lightning strikes recorded compared to the 10-year average of 2,612.

The weather pattern shifted to a more progressive pattern towards the end of August enabling rain to return to many southern parts of the Fire Centre. The onshore, westerly flow pattern yielded more seasonal temperatures, higher relative humidities and a progressive downturn in fire danger ratings.



### 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)**