
STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
2023PREM0061-001433
Sept. 11, 2023

Office of the Premier

Premier's statement on launch of expert task force on emergencies

VICTORIA – Premier David Eby has issued the following statement regarding the launch of an expert task force on wildfires, drought, heat, floods and other emergencies affecting the province:

“With the profound effects of climate change, this year’s unprecedented wildfire season has had a devastating impact on people in British Columbia. Hundreds have lost their homes, tens of thousands were forced to evacuate and two heroic young B.C. firefighters tragically lost their lives.

“Our immediate focus remains on fighting wildfires as well as helping people and communities contend with the impacts of drought. Additionally, we must continually update and enhance our prevention and response measures to the near-constant series of emergencies we are facing as a result of climate change.

“That’s why our government will be launching the expert task force on emergencies to determine how we can simultaneously better support those on the front lines and help apply the lessons we have learned in preparation for the next emergency.

“Based on feedback we have already received, the expert task force on emergencies will provide advice to increase local volunteer recruitment, to further collaborate with communities and First Nations, to incorporate municipal firefighting and other emergency forces, to deploy enhanced technology, and to provide constant support to those on the front lines. The task force will also provide ways to address the need for more accessible support for evacuees, with specific attention to timely access to short-term financial supports and accommodation.

“This has been the worst wildfire season our province has faced and while we are coping with a historic drought, we must be ready for the risk of severe flooding later this year. These crises are indeed scary for many people and government will be there to adapt and immediately support people, no matter what we face, together.

“As I visit wildfire-affected areas, I am in awe of the dedication and professionalism of the first responders, volunteers and BC Wildfire Service and Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness staff. It is because of them that many lives, homes, and businesses were saved. It was also clear to me that we could be doing a better job of leveraging local knowledge and expertise when it comes to preventing and fighting wildfires.

“We owe it to all of those who fought the fires, left their homes behind, and opened their hearts to feed and house evacuees to find ways to support them better as climate disasters get worse and more frequent.”

Contact:

Jimmy Smith
Deputy Communications Director
Jimmy.Smith@gov.bc.ca

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect