
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2024FOR0035-001234
Aug. 1, 2024

Ministry of Forests
Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate
Readiness

People advised to be prepared for wildfires over the long weekend

VICTORIA – While out enjoying the B.C. Day long weekend, people are strongly urged to be prepared and remain vigilant as many parts of the province are experiencing increased temperatures and wildfire risk.

Residents and travellers should use caution and take steps to reduce the risk of wildfire by staying up to date on current conditions, following fire bans and restrictions, and having an emergency plan that is shared with friends and family.

Despite recent cooler weather and precipitation in many regions of B.C., Environment and Climate Change Canada is forecasting hotter temperatures for many parts of the province this weekend, particularly in the southern Interior. Combined with the record-breaking temperatures in July 2024 and ongoing drought, people in B.C. are encouraged to be prepared for the continued higher risk of wildfire in the province.

All open burning, including campfires, continues to be prohibited in southern B.C. However, due to the recent cooler weather and rain in the northern area, small campfires will be permitted in the Northwest Fire Centre, Prince George Fire Centre and Haida Gwaii, as of noon on Thursday Aug. 1, 2024. The Province encourages everyone to do their part in preventing human-caused fire starts. For more information about fire prohibitions, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention/fire-bans-and-restrictions>

Specific areas of B.C. are experiencing wildfire evacuation orders and alerts, as well as road closures. People travelling through B.C. should check ahead for road closures, evacuation alerts, evacuation orders and follow all instructions from local governments and First Nations. For more information about emergencies or road closures in the province, check:

<https://www.emergencyinfbc.gov.bc.ca/> and <https://www.drivebc.ca/>

Currently, there are hundreds of people in B.C. under an evacuation order and thousands more under an evacuation alert. Emergency support services (ESS) are available for people who have evacuated their community and require supports. ESS provides support to evacuees who need assistance meeting their basic needs, such as food, lodging and incidentals.

People can register for ESS by visiting a reception centre, phoning the BC evacuee helpline or through this website: <https://ess.gov.bc.ca/>

Information about the location of reception centres, including routes to the centres, is provided within evacuation orders issued by local governments and First Nations. Orders can also be found here: <https://www.emergencyinfbc.gov.bc.ca/>

During major evacuations, people may be able to access ESS supports via Interac e-Transfer. Online registration for ESS supports has been activated for people evacuated in the Regional District of Central Kootenay and Thompson Nicola Regional District regions.

To access supports online, people will need to create a profile on <https://ess.gov.bc.ca/> and authenticate it with their B.C. Services Card app. After logging into the website, they will be asked a few questions before being provided with instructions about how to access Interac e-Transfer supports.

People are encouraged to create an ESS profile before they are placed under an evacuation order or evacuation alert. By creating a profile beforehand, people will be able to save time during an emergency and may get the supports they need quicker if they are asked to evacuate.

For information or for assistance receiving supports, people can call the BC evacuee helpline at 1 800 387-4258.

The BC Wildfire Service relies on members of the public to report wildfires and thanks the public for its ongoing help in reporting wildfires quickly. Approximately 40% of new fires are reported by the public. Reporting wildfires or dangerous activities that might cause wildfires is a way people can help keep everyone safe. The sooner a wildfire is reported, the sooner a response can begin.

To report a wildfire, unattended campfire or an open burning violation, call 1 800 663-5555 (toll-free) or *5555 on a cellphone, or download the BC Wildfire Service app. The newly improved BC Wildfire Service mobile app allows people to check the latest wildfire situation, road conditions and weather forecasts. Users can also report new wildfires and submit photos, which helps inform BC Wildfire Service operational decision-making.

People are encouraged to prepare for hot summer weather and review their own plans for potential extreme-heat emergencies. The Province's PreparedBC extreme-heat preparedness guide includes information about how to prepare for heat and tips about how to stay safe. The guide is available in French, Punjabi, traditional Chinese and simplified Chinese. To access the guide, visit: <https://PreparedBC.ca/ExtremeHeat>

Learn More:

For the latest information about the current wildfire situation, including fire bans and restrictions, in B.C., visit: <https://bcwildfire.ca>

For the most up-to-date information about wildfire activity in B.C., visit: <https://wildfiresituation.nrs.gov.bc.ca/dashboard>

For information about active evacuation orders and evacuation alerts, visit: <https://www.emergencyinfobc.ca/>

To check current weather alerts, visit: <https://weather.gc.ca>

To view air-quality advisories, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-quality/air-advisories>

For preparedness guides from PreparedBC, including floods, wildfires and extreme heat, visit:

<https://www.preparedbc.ca>

For tips about how to prepare grab-and-go bags, visit:

<https://www.preparedbc.ca/emergencykit>

To find BC Centre for Disease Control information about preparing for heat events, visit:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/preparing-for-heat-events>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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What to know about emergency preparedness

Be ready to evacuate:

- If you are under an evacuation alert, be prepared to leave on short notice. People can prepare for emergencies by creating an evacuation plan using the Emergency Ready Planner, which is a new, online interactive tool to help people create a personalized emergency and evacuation plan. The Emergency Ready Planner is available here: <https://preparedbc.ca/EmergencyReady>
- If you are under an evacuation order, you must leave the area immediately. Follow the instructions of your local government or First Nation.
- By not leaving, you risk the health and safety of you and your family, and that of first responders who may need to come back to help you.
- During emergencies, the Province may issue BC Emergency alerts, which are broadcast on TV, radio and/or cellphones to provide urgent public safety information. Local governments and First Nations may also use mobile alerting applications, such as Alertable or Voyent Alert!
- Understand how your local government or First Nation will share directions and information once an evacuation alert or evacuation order is issued. Most will share information on their website or social media pages. Information will also be amplified here: <https://www.emergencyinfbc.gov.bc.ca/>.
- Emergency support services (ESS) are available to people who are evacuated and need help covering the cost of basic needs, such as the costs associated with accommodation, food and incidentals.
- Follow directions provided by your local government or First Nation about how and where to receive emergency support services if you need them. Your local government or First Nation will provide instructions about whether you can register online or in person at a designated evacuee reception centre.
- During large-scale evacuations, people may have the option to receive support via Interac e-transfer by creating an ESS profile here: <https://ess.gov.bc.ca/>
- People are encouraged to create an ESS profile before an emergency as part of their preparedness. This can save time during an emergency and help support the smooth delivery of supports. Those who have created an ESS profile can log into the online self-service registration tool to receive instructions about the types of supports available to them and how they can be accessed during an emergency.
- The online self-service registration tool may only be available during large-scale evacuations.
- Connect with friends and family who may be able to provide shelter and support if an evacuation order is issued. This will help ensure local accommodation is available for

those who have no other option.

Travelling: Know before you go:

- Destination BC's Know Before You Go web page is regularly updated and serves as a one-stop shop for visitors looking to access key information resources, such as information from DriveBC, the BC Wildfire Service and the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness.
- If the area you were planning to travel to is affected by wildfires or under an evacuation alert or order, connect with a local visitor centre to rebook your trip to another area of the province.
- The River Forecast Centre also asks that anyone planning activities on rivers or waterways check any advisories for high streamflow or other concerns.

FireSmart tips for homes and properties:

- Remove branches, leaves, pine needles and other flammable material around your property, including from roofs, gutters, balconies, doorways and windowsills. Pay particular attention to corners or other tight spots where debris tends to gather.
- Mow any grass within 10 metres of your home regularly, preferably to a height of 10 centimetres or less.
- If you have a deck with a crawlspace beneath it, clear flammable material from there as well.
- Create a 1.5-metre non-combustible zone around buildings by raking or sweeping down to mineral soil, rock or concrete.
- Any movable propane tank or wood pile should be kept at least 10 metres away from your home.
- Check all exterior vents to make sure they are properly screened and in good condition.
- Learn more about FireSmart here: <https://firesmartbc.ca/>

Heat events:

- Monitor Environment and Climate Change Canada for information about temperature forecasts in your region.
- During heat events, the Province works with health authorities, First Nations and local authorities to protect people and communities. This includes community outreach, wellness checks and working with community navigators and organizations focusing on high-risk populations.
- If Environment and Climate Change Canada has issued a heat warning, and local authorities or First Nations are providing supports, the Province uses this platform to amplify information: <https://www.emergencyinfbc.gov.bc.ca/>
- The Province reimburses eligible costs to First Nations and local governments so they can provide supports, including opening emergency cooling centres that may be open overnight and transporting people to and from these centres.
- Always check with your municipality, regional district or First Nation for the most-up-to-date information about emergency cooling centres.
- First Nations and local governments are also able to upload these locations with additional details here: <https://www.EmergencyMapBC.ca>.
- If an extreme-heat emergency occurs, the Province is prepared to issue a BC Emergency

alert to radio, TV and/or cellphones to make sure people are aware and can take steps to protect themselves and their loved ones.

- The Province will also use highway signs to inform people during an extreme-heat emergency.

Preparing for and responding to hot weather:

- If you have air conditioning at home, make sure it is in good working order.
- If you do not have air conditioning at home:
 - Find somewhere you can cool off on hot days. Consider places in your community to spend time indoors, such as local cooling centres, libraries, community centres, movie theatres or malls.
 - As temperatures may be hotter inside than outside, consider outdoor spaces with lots of shade and running water.
 - Shut windows and close curtains and blinds during the heat of the day to block the sun and prevent hotter outdoor air from coming inside. Open doors and windows when it is cooler outside to move that cooler air indoors.
 - Ensure that you have a working fan but do not rely on fans as your primary means of cooling. Fans can be used to draw cooler late-evening, overnight and early-morning air indoors. Keep track of temperatures in your home using a thermostat or thermometer. Sustained indoor temperatures over 31 C can be dangerous for people who are susceptible to heat.
 - If your home gets very hot, consider staying with a friend or relative who has air conditioning, if possible.
- Identify people who may be at high risk of heat-related illness. If possible, help them prepare for heat and plan to check on them. The most susceptible individuals include adults older than 60, people with pre-existing health conditions, people with mental illness and people with disabilities.

Your health during hot weather:

- Drink plenty of water and other liquids to stay hydrated, even if you are not thirsty.
- Spray your body with water, wear a damp shirt, take a cool shower or bath, or sit with part of your body in water to cool down.
- Stay in the shade and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher.
- Take immediate action to cool down if you are overheating. Signs of overheating include feeling unwell, headache and dizziness. Overheating can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Signs of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating, severe headache, muscle cramps, extreme thirst and dark urine. If you are experiencing these symptoms, you should seek a cooler environment, drink plenty of water, rest and use water to cool your body.
- Signs of heat stroke include loss of consciousness, disorientation, confusion, and severe nausea or vomiting. Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Call 911 immediately if you suspect heat stroke.
- Never leave children or pets alone in a parked car. Leaving the car windows slightly open will not keep the inside of the vehicle at a safe temperature.

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