
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2025FOR0016-000328
April 12, 2025

Ministry of Forests

Hundreds of firefighters gather to train, learn ahead of 2025 wildfire season

PENTICTON – Hundreds of municipal, First Nations and BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) firefighters from across the province are coming together at the Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit in Penticton to train, collaborate and learn about new technology and practices ahead of the 2025 wildfire season.

“We don’t know exactly what this wildfire season will bring, but I want British Columbians to know that we are working hard every day to be ready,” said Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests. “With year-round operations, cutting-edge technology and strong partnerships with First Nations and local fire departments, we’re putting in the work to protect our communities.”

The Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit brings together First Nations and local government representatives, emergency managers, wildfire mitigation specialists, and firefighters to collaborate and train with the BCWS and discuss the latest developments in wildfire technology, mitigation and prevention.

The five-day event attracts more than 350 wildfire professionals and includes two days of collaborative training between structural fire departments from throughout the province and the BCWS. The training focuses on fireline operations, deployment of fire engines, large water supply operations and overall approach to structure protection in the wildland-urban interface to better protect communities from the threat of wildfires.

Following the training session, a three-day conference for more than 700 municipal and First Nations leaders will focus on wildfire resiliency and community action through FireSmart.

“Learning and training are vital to thriving in high-risk environments,” said Brian Hutchinson, superintendent fire services, BCWS. “With over 350 fire service professionals attending the training summit portion of the conference, we continue to collaboratively build capacity, capabilities and resilience to the impacts of wildfires.”

Representatives from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CALFIRE) will be in attendance this year, further developing the partnership with B.C. In January 2025, BCWS staff were deployed to California to support CALFIRE with expertise and personnel during the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles. Working alongside Californian crews, BCWS gained valuable experience managing large fires in the wildland-urban interface. Building on this interagency experience, BCWS and CALFIRE are better co-ordinated to fight wildfires in B.C.

Ahead of the upcoming wildfire season, the Province is working to keep communities safe by focusing on all four pillars of emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. This work includes:

- securing equipment and aircraft contracts;
- continuing to implement new technologies and innovation;
- focusing on prevention work; and
- engaging with local partners, including communities and local equipment operators.

Learn More:

To learn about how to prepare for wildfires, visit: <https://firesmartbc.ca/>

To learn about funding for community firefighting capacity, visit:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases>

To learn more about the First Nations boot camp, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gu6awAFy6mI>

To learn more about New Recruit Bootcamp visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bsva0qmNUzQ>

Contact:

Ministry of Forests
Media Relations
250 896-4320

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

BACKGROUND 1

For Immediate Release
2025FOR0016-000328
April 12, 2025

Ministry of Forests

Facts about B.C. wildfire prevention

- Since 2018, the Province has partnered with the Union of BC Municipalities and First Nations Emergency Services Society to reduce wildfire risk through the FireSmart Community Funding and Support (FCFS) program, with \$185 million committed to date.
- There has been \$90 million allocated in 2025 for wildfire prevention initiatives through BCWS, FireSmart initiatives, and the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC).
- Technology and innovation improvements for the 2025 wildfire season include:
 - implementing new wildfire predictive technology across the province;
 - working with UBC Okanagan to pilot a camera network that communities can tie into for wildfire detection;
 - respiratory protection now available to all operational staff, with plans to study fire camp air quality;
 - continuing to utilize and further develop night-time firefighting operations, including NVIS technology piloted in 2024; and
 - improved provincial weather stations that expand weather prediction windows to provide staff with the best data available to inform operational decision-making.
- There are 88 cultural and prescribed-burn projects planned for 2025. There were 48 completed in 2024.
- BCWS is planning to treat 9,600 hectares in 2025-26 with more than an additional 2,100 hectares planned under FESBC.

Contact:

Ministry of Forests
Media Relations
250 896-4320

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

BACKGROUND 2

For Immediate Release
2025FOR0016-000328
April 12, 2025

Ministry of Forests

Working together to prevent wildfire and keep communities safe

To increase wildfire prevention and help keep people safe, the Province has taken action over the past six years to strengthen provincial and community capacity for wildfire mitigation and preparedness.

In recent years, the BC Wildfire Service's (BCWS) wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts have expanded rapidly, supported by the BCWS growing into a year-round organization focused on proactively reducing wildfire risks as well as responding to fires. Prevention efforts have included hundreds of wildfire risk-reduction and fuel-management projects with partner agencies, with 88 cultural and prescribed fire projects planned for 2025, of which eight have already been implemented this spring.

Since 2018, the Province, through BCWS, has invested approximately \$466 million in wildfire resiliency and risk-reduction projects. The Province's approach to wildfire risk reduction is through strategic partnerships with communities, First Nations, and external partners, in addition to the BCWS' direct wildfire mitigation. In advance of this year's wildfire season, the Province continues to work on fuel mitigation and community preparedness activities to reduce the threat of wildfire, in partnership with local governments and First Nations, and the following organizations:

FireSmart BC

FireSmart actions are tested and proven, and they increase your home's chance of survival in the event of a wildfire. FireSmart is the Canadian standard recognized by all provinces and territories based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. This year, there are 250 FireSmart recognized neighbourhoods throughout B.C., and approximately 140 FireSmart co-ordinators within local governments and First Nations. More than 113 local governments and First Nations participate in the Wildfire Mitigation Program, formerly the Home Partners Program, including 20 of the 28 regional districts

As a leader in wildfire mitigation and preparedness, work by FireSmart BC includes:

- funding 309 local governments and First Nations to undertake FireSmart activities;
- 231 FireSmart positions proposed for funding or partially subsidized in communities across the province; and
- 57 garden centre locations across B.C. now participate in the FireSmart Plant Program.

Union of BC Municipalities and First Nations' Emergency Services Society

Since 2019, the Province has taken action in partnership with the Union of BC Municipalities and First Nations' Emergency Services Society to reduce wildfire risk through FireSmart grants and supports, with \$185 million committed to date. The Union of BC Municipalities, in

partnership with First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), administers the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports (FCFS) program to communities on behalf of the Province. More than 936 applications have been received since 2019, leading to more than \$126 million in approved completed projects.

Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC)

The Province partners with FESBC to reduce wildfire risks, enhance wildlife habitats, improve damaged or low-value forests, and manage greenhouse gases. Since 2016, \$79.6 million has been invested in 201 community wildfire risk-reduction projects through FESBC. As part of Budget 2024, an additional \$60 million was announced for FESBC, with \$20 million to be allocated each year for the next three years. This funding supports wildfire risk reduction and/or enhanced wood fibre utilization.

Fire Chiefs Association of British Columbia

The Fire Chiefs' Association of British Columbia is a non-profit organization that serves as an essential source of information, education, and community for its members. It proactively engages with the government and standards organizations on issues relating to fire services, resulting in effective and supported fire departments across the province. Through an agreement with the Fire Chiefs Association of BC (FCABC), BC Wildfire Service has worked closely with local fire departments to co-ordinate equipment and personnel, with more than 100 fire departments that have pre-registered their personal and equipment for provincial deployments this season.

Farmland Advantage

Farmland Advantage helps farmers identify and enhance the natural values on a farm that can be protected, restored, and enhanced and develops recommendations and plans to preserve them. Since 2021, the BCWS has worked with Farmland Advantage on \$1.4 million in wildfire risk-reduction and community resiliency projects, focusing on strategic areas in the wildland-urban interface.

Fraser Basin Council

After the 2023 fire season, the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies recommended defining clear pathways for organized and trained local people to play a role in wildfire preparedness and response, based on consistent safety, pre-season training and readiness standards and plans, and integration into the BCWS or local emergency management structure with appropriate co-ordination, accountability and oversight. The BCWS partnered with the Fraser Basin Council in fall 2023 to engage rural communities as part of the Wildfire Roundtables they facilitate.

Through this engagement, the Fraser Basin Council received responses from 37 out of 89 electoral area directors. Of the 37 responses, 35 identified existing groups that were outside of structural protection areas. Twenty-four of these groups were organized, and 11 were not organized at the time.

The feedback received was instrumental in guiding the steps BCWS took leading into the 2024 fire season to invest in the preparedness for these groups by training more than 430 community members across 21 groups and engaging them in co-operative response efforts in the 2024 fire season. The groups that were hired in the 2024 fire season were engaged in low-complexity tasks aligned with their basic training such as mopping up, cooling ash pits and

patrolling areas to prevent potential flare-ups.

In recognition of the need to grow this program beyond the initial training intake in 2023, the Regional District Cooperative Community Wildfire Response Organizations program was established to assist in funding training and equipment purchasing of rural response groups.

Columbia Basin Trust

Initially launched as part of the BC Economic Recovery Plan in 2021 to support wildfire risk-reduction projects in the Columbia Basin, this program became the Columbia Basin Wildfire Resiliency Initiative in 2022-23. With an ongoing investment of \$4 million to support expanded wildfire risk reduction in the Columbia Basin, the program is supported by the BCWS, the Ministry of Forests Regional Operations, and the Columbia Basin Trust.

To date, there have been 20 projects supported in 18 communities.

Cattlemen's Association

The Province partners with the British Columbia Cattlemen's Association to support beef cattle producers in B.C. Since 2021, \$300,000 has been provided in grant funding to build and expand on an existing initiative that develops, pilots and tests new models of targeted livestock grazing as a supplemental tool for managing fine fuels in B.C.'s forested rangelands.

B.C. Community Forest Association

BCWS works alongside the B.C. Community Forest Association (BCCFA) to reduce wildfire risk in community forests. BCCFA is a non-profit society serving as the voice and advocate of community forests in BC. Currently BCCFA represents more than 100 rural and Indigenous communities across the province. Under the BC Economic Recovery Plan, \$5 million was allocated to the BCCFA to reduce wildfire risk and stimulate employment opportunities in 15 community forest tenure areas located around rural communities between 2020 and 2023.

Additionally, community forests have invested \$8 million of their own funds and managed more than \$17 million in grants from outside sources such as FESBC to build wildfire resiliency and reduce risk through mechanical treatments and use of prescribed fire.

Contact:

Ministry of Forests
Media Relations
250 896-4320

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