



WILDFIRE SAFETY INFORMATION FOR MEDIA

For Immediate Release
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Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development
BC Wildfire Service

ATTENTION: Assignment Editors
Media safety at the scene of a wildfire

KAMLOOPS – The British Columbia government is committed to keeping the public informed about wildfire activity in the province.

When a fire spreads quickly and threatens a community, it's important that the public has access to current information about the fire, and what steps the BC Wildfire Service is taking in response.

The news media plays an essential role in keeping the public informed and safe, but it's important to keep the media safe, too. Under the Workers Compensation Act, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development is responsible for the safety of all individuals who attend a wildfire work site. If you are planning to arrange a visit to the scene of a wildfire, you should be aware that you will be subject to site safety rules.

NOTE: Given the unpredictable nature of wildfires and wildfire behaviour, the final decision on providing access to a wildfire rests with the wildfire's incident commander, and initial permission to visit a wildfire may be revoked in the interest of safety. If a media representative enters a wildfire site without permission, it not only jeopardizes that person's safety, but the safety of firefighting crews. Such conduct may even force a halt to fire response operations (including air support) until that person is removed from the site.

Please respect the BC Wildfire Service's decisions regarding access to a wildfire, since entering the fire site without permission can directly affect the ability to contain a fire.

Please notify the BC Wildfire Service's local fire information officer if you would like to visit a wildfire work site. You will be provided with details about the fire, safety restrictions and site access protocols. This information may be provided at the site or by telephone. The BC Wildfire Service understands your need for quick access to a fire site, and will strive to provide you with this access in a safe and efficient manner.

Provincial Wildfire Coordination Centre:

250 312-3051

Coastal Fire Centre:

250 951-4209

Cariboo Fire Centre:

778 779-2101

Prince George Fire Centre:

778 293-2880

Kamloops Fire Centre:

250 554-5965

Southeast Fire Centre:

250 365-4014

Northwest Fire Centre:

250 847-6639

A list of fire information officers and their contact information is available on the BC Wildfire Service website:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/contact-channels/media-information>

1. **In order to be escorted around a fire site, you must wear appropriate clothing.** This includes a hard hat and clothing that fully covers your arms and legs. Avoid highly flammable synthetic fabrics such as nylon and polyester. Tightly woven clothes made from natural fibres are recommended. A high-visibility vest and eye protection may be required. Footwear suitable for rough terrain is essential.
2. **A BC Wildfire Service representative will be assigned to you and safety rules will be discussed.** Please stay with this designated representative at all times at the work site and follow his or her instructions.
3. **On the fireline, you must designate a supervisor from your media organization to brief your workers on safety regulations and ensure that they comply with these rules.**

To ensure your compliance with health and safety regulations, the BC Wildfire Service requires that you adhere to the rules listed below:

General

- Your appointed supervisor has the authority and responsibility to correct any unsafe activity.
- The incident commander has the authority to restrict or limit access to a site.
- A BC Wildfire Service representative will provide relevant safety information, and will communicate and review site hazards for your staff at the fire site.
- In the event that this representative's instructions are disregarded, the incident commander may require the violator(s) to leave the site.
- Continual safety violators may be reported to WorkSafeBC or Labour Canada for further followup.

Aircraft operations

- All wildfires automatically have "restricted airspace" applied to them. This is usually defined as an area with a radius of five nautical miles around the fire, but it can be altered. It should not be assumed that it's clear to enter the airspace outside of this area. It is illegal to enter restricted airspace without prior approval from the BC Wildfire Service's regional wildfire coordination officer (RWCO).

- If you want to request air access to a restricted area, please contact a fire information officer. The request will be forwarded to the regional wildfire co-ordination officer, and access may be granted if conditions are appropriate and it's safe to do so. If there is a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) in place for the wildfire, the pilot must check the NOTAM for any other specific restrictions.
- The operation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or "drones") near an active wildfire is illegal and extremely dangerous, especially when low-flying firefighting aircraft are present. Transport Canada and the BC Wildfire Service explicitly prohibit the use of drones of any size near a wildfire. Violating these rules can jeopardize the lives of aircrews and those on the ground, and inhibit fire suppression activities. For safety reasons, if a drone is detected in the restricted airspace over a wildfire, the BC Wildfire Service will ground any of its aircraft that are nearby until the drone has left the area.
- More information about drone safety is available on the Transport Canada website: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/drone-safety.html>

Stay alert

- Know your escape routes. **ASK** if you're unsure or have any other concerns.
- Watch out for rolling debris that may be dislodged by fire suppression activity.
- Stay away from windfalls, weakened trees, loose rocks and hot spots.
- Ride only in standard vehicles (not heavy machinery). Always wear a seatbelt.
- Use caution around machinery, and only approach when you are in full view of the operator.
- Stay at least two tree lengths away from tree-falling activities.
- A safety briefing will be provided before you enter a helicopter.
- When boarding or exiting a helicopter, follow the pilot's instructions.
- Stay clear of airtanker drop areas and helicopter landing areas.
- Have plenty of water on hand to prevent dehydration.
- Any injury **MUST** be reported and treated.

If you have any questions about your safety responsibilities as an employer, you may contact the following organizations:

For print media outlets:

WorkSafeBC - Prevention Division
 604 276-3100 in the Lower Mainland
 1 888 621-7233 toll-free within B.C.

www.worksafebc.com

For radio and television media outlets:

Labour Program
 1 800 641-4049

Thank you for reviewing these site safety rules. The BC Wildfire Service is dedicated to safeguarding all personnel within a fire site. Your efforts to help ensure safe work site practices are appreciated.

Contact:

Kevin Skrepnek
Chief Fire Information Officer
Provincial Wildfire Coordination Centre
BC Wildfire Service
250 312-3051

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