
WILDFIRE SAFETY INFORMATION FOR MEDIA

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
BC Wildfire Service

ATTENTION: ASSIGNMENT EDITORS MEDIA SAFETY AT THE SCENE OF A WILDFIRE

KAMLOOPS – The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is committed to keeping the public informed about wildfire activity in the province. When a fire spreads quickly and threatens a community, it is critical that the public has access to current information about the fire and what steps the ministry's BC Wildfire Service is taking to suppress that fire.

News media serving B.C. communities provide essential information to help keep the public informed and safe. One of the BC Wildfire Service's objectives throughout the fire season is to establish and maintain lines of communication with the public through the provision of timely information to the media.

Under the Workers Compensation Act, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations 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 behavior, 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.*

Please notify the BC Wildfire Service's local Fire Information Officer if you would like to attend the 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.

- 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. Suitable footwear 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 you to adhere to the rules listed below:

General guidelines

- Your appointed supervisor has the authority and responsibility to correct any unsafe activity.
- The wildfire's 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 follow-up.

Aircraft operations

- All wildfires have "restricted airspace" automatically applied to them. This is defined as an area with a radius of five nautical miles around the fire. It is illegal to enter this area 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 Coordination 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 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.
- Many drones also require a Special Flight Operations Certificate (SFOC) for commercial use. For more information, check here:
<http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/opssvs/getting-permission-fly-drone.html>

Stay alert

- Know your escape routes. **ASK** if you are 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) and 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 further 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 Canada
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.

Media Contact:

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Chief Fire Information Officer
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BC Wildfire Service
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