

HEALTH & SAFETY NOTICE

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Mines Health, Safety and Enforcement Division: Mine.Safety@gov.bc.ca

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2024 Wildfire & Freshet Preparedness



Although provincial snowpack averages are low, freshet is around the corner. Accompanied by heavy seasonal rains, rising temperatures, and rapid melting, freshet can cause flooding, debris flows, and landslides. After freshet, wildfire events, which have already started or held over in some areas of the province, will likely increase quickly due to the lower snowpacks and continued provincial drought.

Over the past decade, the severity and frequency of wildfires in British Columbia (BC) have dramatically changed the natural landscape. The current state of drought and low snowpack in BC, following the historic fires of 2023, highlights the importance of response planning and

hazard mitigation for the upcoming wildfire season. Planning and preparedness are vital components of a successful response effort to fire or flood, ranging from homeowner-level measures to company-scale policy and procedure. BC mining operations are often in remote areas with limited access and egress options. This, accompanied by unpredictable fire behaviour, increases the need for proper planning and preparation.

Mine managers must ensure response plans are updated to include threats of climate change, such as increasing wildfires, persistent drought, and flood-related events. Responses may include contingencies outlined in the Operations, Maintenance and Surveillance Manuals for Tailings Storage or Water Management Facilities, Site Monitoring and Water Management Plans, and Mine Emergency Response Plans (MERPS).

General Recommendations

- Good water management practices and vigilant monitoring of changing conditions are critical.
- Understand site susceptibility to drought, wildfire, and flood threat; proactively mitigate hazards where possible.
- Develop wildfire preparedness procedures and training for workers; ensure procedures are clear and effective.
- Plan for and practice on-site wildfire response; identify critical infrastructure and plan for its protection.
- Assess site access and egress routes to understand possible evacuation strategies, including time to escape.
- Mining is an industrial activity; review and understand any applicable requirements related to BC's Wildfire Act and associated regulations and adhere to all burn restrictions.

Mine managers are reminded of their responsibility to ensure their workers' health and safety. Additionally, section 3.7.1 of the Mines Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in BC requires mine managers to develop a MERP, which outlines the response procedures in the event of an emergency.

Resources

- Report a wildfire by calling 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on a cell phone
- [Wildfire Service - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov2/serv/bc/wildfire/)
- [Mine Emergency Response Plan Guidelines](#)

Consult the Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in BC for regulatory requirements