RECENT CONDITIONS

July proved to be a challenging month for wildfire suppression activities. Since July 1, there has been 935 new wildfire starts in British Columbia. Over 70 per cent of those have been lightning caused.

The extreme heat experienced across the province in the beginning of July, in combination with below average precipitation levels in June, resulted in fuels being increasingly susceptible to ignition. These conditions also attributed to rapid fire growth and increased rates of spread on existing wildfires.

The second half of July brought moderate precipitation to the northern regions of B.C., helping to slow fire growth and calm fire behaviour. However, the precipitation received was not substantial enough to extinguish a number of large wildfires. As dry conditions return in August, there is potential for fire activity to increase.

So far this year this has been 1,327 wildfires resulting in 557,718 hectares being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATISTICS TO DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILDFIRES</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,327</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-YEAR AVG.</td>
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<td>10-YEAR AVG.</td>
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<td>15-YEAR AVG.</td>
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<td>20-YEAR AVG.</td>
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<td>25-YEAR AVG.</td>
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</table>

AUGUST OUTLOOK

Early August is forecast to see widespread rainfall throughout B.C. Though the rain will help moderate fire activity for the short term, a ridge is forecast to settle over the province bringing another period of warm and dry weather. As the month progresses, current Wildfires of Note are expected to grow with potential for big spread events being when winds increase over 20 kilometres per hour.

Weather models are indicating that temperatures will remain normal to above normal and precipitation levels will be normal to below normal. These conditions will continue to support new fire starts and sustained fire development. The wildfires burning across the province require a large number of wildfire personnel and will continue as such until extended periods of precipitation are received across the province.

NOT ALL RAIN IS CREATED EQUAL

Rain plays a significant role in reducing wildfire behaviour and spread potential. However, the effectiveness of rain on wildfires varies. For example, 10 mm of rain received in a few hours will have less of an impact on wildfires than 10 mm of rain received over five days. The reason for this is the ability of rain to infiltrate surface fuels and soils. Heavy amounts of rain in a short period of time will result in runoff and less moisture influencing dry fuels. This run off effect is compounded by slope.

On the flip side, a light drizzle will be less likely to run off and will infiltrate the surface fuels resulting in reduced fire behaviour over a number of days.

The Build-Up Index is a representation of how fuel is available to burn and needs at least 1.4 mm of rain in 24 hours to reduce values.