



BRITISH COLUMBIA SEASON OUTLOOK

As of Aug. 1, 2019

Summer Outlook (August) Fuel conditions are near normal throughout most of the province, due to precipitation received during the latter half of June and in July. Many weather stations recorded data that indicated July was wetter than normal. However, drought levels in the western half of the province are still “dry” to “very dry”.

Two areas of concern are indicated on the map. The July rainfall missed the northwest corner of the province, so fuels in that area are extremely dry. The south-central area of the province is continuing to dry out after some July rainfall. Weather patterns in this area in August are typically hot and dry, with lightning a frequent occurrence. As fuels dry out and grasses cure, fire risk will increase in this area.

The number of wildfires so far for this time of year (and the number of hectares burned) are well below normal: 585 fires and 12,661 hectares. The area that’s been burned is only 10% of the 10-year average in British Columbia.

About 42% of the fire starts have been linked to lightning, followed by human-related causes at 36%. Current suppression tactics are successfully holding most wildfires to a small size. As we progress further into the typically warmest and driest part of the year, suppression efforts may be challenged by an increase in the amount of dry fuels and the potential for a high number of lightning-caused wildfires.

Extended Outlook (September to October) This period is projected to have a high probability of above-seasonal temperatures throughout most the province, particularly the western half.

How does the BC Wildfire Service predict a fire season?

This forecast was assessed by meteorologists and fire behaviour specialists who considered a range of environmental factors and observed weather data. This includes accounting for conditions that affect soil moisture, fine fuel dryness, and vegetation growth, which influence the amount of fuel available for wildfires.

What factors influence this prediction?

The severity of a fire season is highly dependent on local weather patterns such as timing and amount of precipitation, length of dry periods, thunderstorms, and wind events. Long-term weather models are useful to indicate trends and patterns over time. However, daily weather cannot be reliably forecast much beyond a few days in advance. The BC Wildfire Service maintains its levels of preparedness by studying forecasts, using the experience of previous fire seasons, and analyzing trends to give us a good indication of what to expect in the upcoming season. We will continue to collect data and utilize forecasting models to produce monthly updates of this seasonal outlook.

What can we do to prepare for an upcoming fire season?

For information on how to establish wildfire resiliency within our forests and communities, visit:

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/prevention or www.FireSmartBC.ca

