

Important contacts

To report a wildfire:

- Call **1 800 663-5555** toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone.

When a person calls to report a wildfire, personal information is collected by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development under Section 26 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. If you have any questions about the collection of this information, please contact the supervisor of the Provincial Forest Fire Reporting Centre at 250 387-2225 or at 2957 Jutland Road, Victoria, BC, V8T 5J9.

Obtain fire-related information by phone:

- To listen to recorded information about campfires, open fire prohibitions, and area or travel restrictions, call toll-free: **1 888 3FOREST** (1 888 336-7378)

Obtain fire-related information online:

- www.BCWildfire.ca
- www.facebook.com/BCForestFireInfo
- www.twitter.com/bcgovfireinfo

Visit the BC Wildfire Service website for information about:

- open fire prohibitions or restrictions;
- area restrictions and travel restrictions;
- provincial maps indicating: fire danger rating, temperature, relative humidity, precipitation and wind speed; and
- detailed Fire Danger Class ratings for individual fire weather stations in B.C.

Ventilation index and weather conditions:

- The ventilation index (also known as the venting index) is updated daily at 7 a.m. and is available online at: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/epdpa/venting/venting.html>

Information about FireSmart activities in British Columbia:

- To learn more about FireSmart in B.C., visit www.firesmartbc.ca

RESPECT THE USE OF FIRE

BACKYARD & INDUSTRIAL BURNING



A Guide to Category 2 Open Fires



Category 2 open fires

In British Columbia, the *Wildfire Act* and the Wildfire Regulation specify your legal obligations when using fire in (or within one kilometre of) forest land or grassland.

Under the Wildfire Regulation, a Category 2 open fire is a fire that:

- burns material in one pile not exceeding two metres in height and three metres in width; or
- burns material concurrently in two piles, each not exceeding two metres high and three metres wide; or
- burns stubble or grass over an area that does not exceed 0.2 hectares (2,000 square metres); or
- is not a campfire.

People may light, fuel, or make use of a Category 2 open fire within one kilometre of forest land or grassland when:

- there are no prohibitions or other restrictions in place for doing so;
- it is safe to do so and will continue to be safe; and
- a fuel break—sometimes called a fire break—has been established around the burn area. (A fuel break is a change in fuel type or condition, typically a strip of land cleared down to the mineral soil to prevent fire spread.)

While the fire is burning and there is a potential risk of the fire escaping (i.e. spreading beyond its intended size), the person who lights or maintains the fire must:

- maintain the fuel break;
- have an adequate fire suppression system available at the burn site for fire control if the fire escapes;
- ensure that the fire is watched and patrolled by a person equipped with at least one firefighting hand tool to stop the fire escaping; and
- ensure that the fire does not exceed the capacity of the people, firefighting tools and heavy equipment on site to take timely action to stop the fire escaping.

In addition:

- The person who lights or maintains the fire must ensure that the fire is fully extinguished and the ashes are cold to the touch before leaving the area for any length of time.

- If the fire spreads beyond the burn area, the person responsible must carry out fire control activities and extinguish the fire if practicable.
- If the fire spreads beyond the burn area, the person responsible must report the escaped fire to the BC Wildfire Service at 1 800 663-5555 (or call 911 if the site falls within the jurisdiction of a local fire department).

Persons engaged in an “Industrial Activity” (as defined in the *Wildfire Act*) and carrying out fire control for a Category 2 open fire must make available to fight the fire at least the greater of:

- one piece of heavy equipment, one fire suppression system and six workers (each equipped with at least one firefighting hand tool); and
- all workers, fire suppression systems, heavy equipment and firefighting hand tools within 30 kilometres by road (if on Crown land) or all resources working on the land (if on land other than Crown land).

Anyone who lights, fuels or makes use of a Category 2 open fire must comply with the *Environmental Management Act* and the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation. Before lighting a Category 2 fire, please review “A Guide to the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation” (particularly the information about prohibited materials): <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-pollution/smoke-burning/regulations/openburningregulation>

The *Environmental Management Act* requires individuals to check local venting conditions prior to lighting a Category 2 open fire, to ensure that local conditions are suitable for burning. The venting index (sometimes called the ventilation index) is updated daily and is available at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/air/air-pollution/smoke-burning/venting-index>

A burn registration number is not required for a Category 2 open fire.

Safe burning is your Responsibility

Make responsible burning decisions:

The *Wildfire Act* puts the onus on you to use fire safely. Before lighting a fire, you are required to determine whether you can burn safely. Then you must take reasonable precautions to ensure that your fire does not escape.

- Check with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development for any current prohibitions on open burning. These restrictions are typically put in place when conditions are dry and wildfire risks increase. Check the BC Wildfire Service website at www.bcwildfire.ca or phone the fire information line at **1 888 336-7378**.
- Check current and forecasted wind conditions. If the wind is strong enough to carry sparks to other combustible materials, do not burn.

Be prepared to respond

Under provincial law, you must keep a watch on your fire to stop it escaping (i.e. spreading beyond its intended size). You are responsible for meeting legal requirements to control the fire and extinguish it if needed.

About the Wildfire Act

The *Wildfire Act* specifies your legal obligations when using fire for campfires, backyard burning, industrial/agricultural burning, and resource management purposes. It is the responsibility of the people using the fire to ensure that their activities do not cause wildfires.

A contravention of the *Wildfire Act* is an offence. A person who contravenes the *Wildfire Act* may be subject to an administrative penalty, a fine upon conviction, and/or firefighting, damage and rehabilitation costs as specified in the *Wildfire Act*.

If your fire escapes, try to stop it spreading further:

- First, try to extinguish the fire (if practicable).
- Second, report the escaped fire as soon as possible to: a fire emergency response telephone number (911 in organized areas, or **1 800 663-5555** toll-free or ***5555** on a cellphone if the fire is on Crown land); an official (as defined by the *Wildfire Act*) employed by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development; or a peace officer (e.g. RCMP or municipal police).
- Continue carrying out fire control activities (if it is safe to do so) until you're relieved by an official.

Extinguish your fire properly

You must fully extinguish your fire and the ashes must be cold to the touch before you leave the area for any length of time.

Open burning that's done carelessly or improperly can result in a wildfire that could cost millions of dollars to extinguish and could unnecessarily divert firefighting resources from naturally occurring wildfires.

Where the Wildfire Act applies

The *Wildfire Act* applies on both public (Crown) land and private land throughout B.C.

Before lighting any fire, always check with your local government or fire department to see if any local bylaws or fire use restrictions are in effect. If local bylaws or restrictions are in place, those agencies can provide further information.

High-risk activities

The *Wildfire Act* sets out additional obligations for people engaged in high-risk activities on or within 300 metres of forested land or grassland.

High-risk activities are listed in the Wildfire Regulation and include:

- mechanical brushing
- disk trenching
- preparation or use of explosives
- using fire-producing or spark-producing tools (including cutting tools)
- using or preparing fireworks or pyrotechnics
- grinding (including rail grinding)
- mechanical land clearing
- clearing and maintaining rights of way, including grass mowing
- any of the following activities carried out in a cutblock, excluding a road, landing, roadside work area or log sort area in the cutblock
 - operating a power saw
 - mechanical tree felling, woody debris piling or tree processing, including de-limbing
 - welding
 - portable wood chipping, milling, processing or manufacturing
 - skidding logs or log forwarding, unless it is improbable that the skidding or forwarding will result in the equipment contacting rock
 - yarding logs using cable systems

Anyone engaged in these activities must check the Fire Danger Class for the area where the work is being done, maintain a fire watch, and have the means available to report a fire.

Do you still have questions about how to conduct an open burn properly?

If you need help or advice to plan your burning activities, contact the BC Wildfire Service office nearest you:

Coastal Fire Centre

(Parksville) 250 951-4222

Kamloops Fire Centre

(Kamloops) 250 554-5500

Southeast Fire Centre

(Castlegar) 250 365-4040

Cariboo Fire Centre

(Williams Lake) 250 989-2600

Prince George Fire Centre

(Prince George) 250 561-4628

Northwest Fire Centre

(Smithers) 250 847-6600

This guide is intended for information purposes only. It is not legal advice. The *Wildfire Act* and Wildfire Regulation are available online.

Wildfire Act: http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/04031_01

Wildfire Regulation: http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/11_38_2005



RESPECT THE USE OF FIRE