
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests and Range

RESIDENTS URGED TO PLAY IT SAFE WITH BACKYARD BURNING

VICTORIA – Forests and Range Minister Pat Bell is urging British Columbians to reduce wildfire hazards around their homes and exercise caution with backyard burning activities this spring.

“Starting this long weekend, many people will be out in their gardens tidying up debris and disposing of yard waste,” said Bell. “We want to encourage people to reduce the wildfire hazards around their homes and remind everyone to act responsibly by following all provincial and local fire safety rules. This is particularly critical in areas that experienced a fairly dry winter and spring. The best way to fight wildfires is to prevent them in the first place.”

Homeowners are encouraged to reduce the hazards of wildfire by consulting the [BC FireSmart Manual](#). The manual outlines many simple preventative steps such as:

- Prune tree branches to a height of 2 metres or more.
- Remove all trees, long grass, shrubs, logs, branches, twigs and needles within 10 metres of house.
- Thin trees (with three to six metres between crowns) for at least 30 metres from the house.
- Store firewood 10 metres or more from the house.

Before backyard burning, people must ensure conditions are appropriate and that they are aware of their responsibilities. For example, residents are required to create a fuel-free zone or fuel break around a burn area to prevent grass fires from escaping. Other standards include:

- Ensuring a fire site is away from buildings, trees and combustible materials
- Being aware of windy conditions that can spread sparks.
- Ensuring people, water and hand tools are readily available to prevent a fire from escaping.
- Never leaving a fire unattended until it is completely out.
- Checking with local government agencies for current burning bylaws.

Starting April 2, 2010, open fire restrictions apply to grass fires and open fires larger than one metre by one metre within the Cariboo Fire Centre’s jurisdiction. For all other areas, a burn registration number is required to burn piles larger than three metres wide by 2 metres high, or for burns exceeding 0.2 hectares (more than 2,000 square metres). Numbers can be attained free of charge by calling 1-888 797-1717.

In British Columbia, the Wildfire Act specifies a person's legal obligations when using fire on, or within one kilometre of, forest land or grassland. If a grass fire escapes, a person may be responsible for suppression costs. Seasonal weather patterns are expected around the province this long weekend, but grasses are cured and vulnerable to fire starts, especially in windy conditions.

Wildfires or unattended campfires can be reported by calling 1-800 663-5555 or *5555 on most cellular networks.

For further information on safe backyard burning and how to protect your property, visit www.bcwildfire.ca/.

For the BC FireSmart manual, visit <http://bcwildfire.ca/FightingWildfire/safety/pamphlets/FireSmart-BC4.pdf>.

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