



2016-05-12

Wildfire Newsletter

Southeast Fire Centre

Since April 1, the BC Wildfire Service has responded to 21 fires within the Southeast Fire Centre. Only one of these fires was caused by lightning, which means that 20 fires were human-caused, and therefore preventable. Education is the best way to get the message about fire safety out to the public, which is why the BC Wildfire Service maintains several media platforms in addition to issuing information bulletins to radio and print media outlets.

Any relevant fire-related information, such as changes in restrictions, evacuation alerts or orders, high-profile fire updates and much more, can be found online at www.bcwildfire.ca

This go-to site includes links to air quality information, fire prevention materials, and the Wildfire Act and Wildfire Regulation.

The BC Wildfire Service also maintains the BC Wildfire Service Facebook page, which has close to 85,000 members. Aside from providing instant updates about the wildfire situation throughout B.C., the page is interactive. You can click on the “MESSAGE NOW” option on the left of the screen to ask questions to BC Wildfire Service Information staff who will usually respond within the hour.

The BC Wildfire Service also has a Twitter handle (@BCGovFireInfo). Through this Twitter account, you can be updated about Emergency Management BC activities as well as urgent Ministry of Transportation information.

Recap of 2015 fire season

Last year, the Southeast Fire Centre experienced a very challenging wildfire season, with several evacuation alerts and orders as well as the tragic loss of 30 homes in the Rock Creek fire.

Highly visible fires (such as the Paulson Pass fire, the Midgeley Mountain fire outside of Creston, and the Stickpin fire South of the border in Curlew, Washington) served as a stark reminder of the danger posed by wildfires.

Due to a lack of precipitation throughout the spring and summer, an exceptionally high number of lightning storms passing through the Region and various human causes, there were 577 wildfires last year in the Southeast Fire Centre. An astonishing 485 of them were lightning-caused.

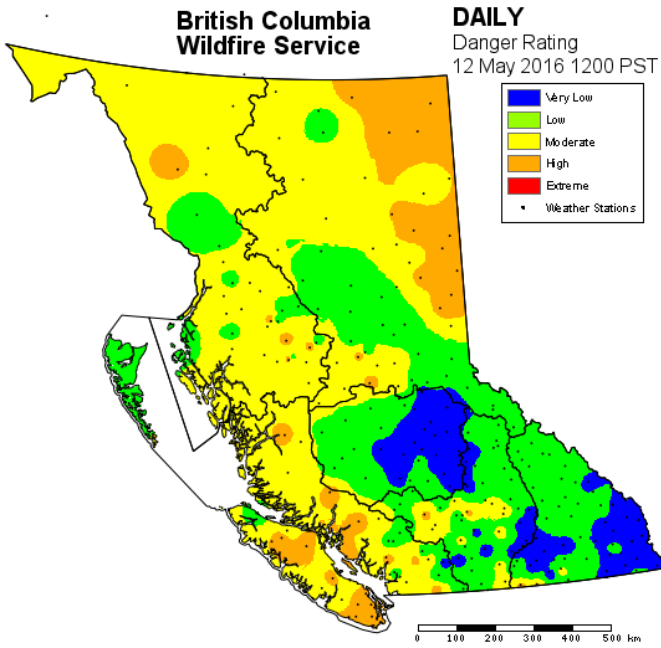
Here in the Southeast, the Paulson Pass was in imminent danger of being shut down, just as Highway 3 and Highway 33 were closed due to the Rock Creek and the Sidley Mountain fires. As we have recently witnessed in Fort McMurray, critical exit routes may be the only way to safety for entire communities, especially in the remote, rural areas that abound here in the Southeast region.

Throughout those challenging times, the support that firefighters received was heart-warming. The public’s recognition of the hard work that BC Wildfire Service staff do to keep communities safe from wildfires goes a long way in keeping up morale during a busy wildfire season. On behalf of everyone in the Southeast Fire Centre, thank you for all your support.

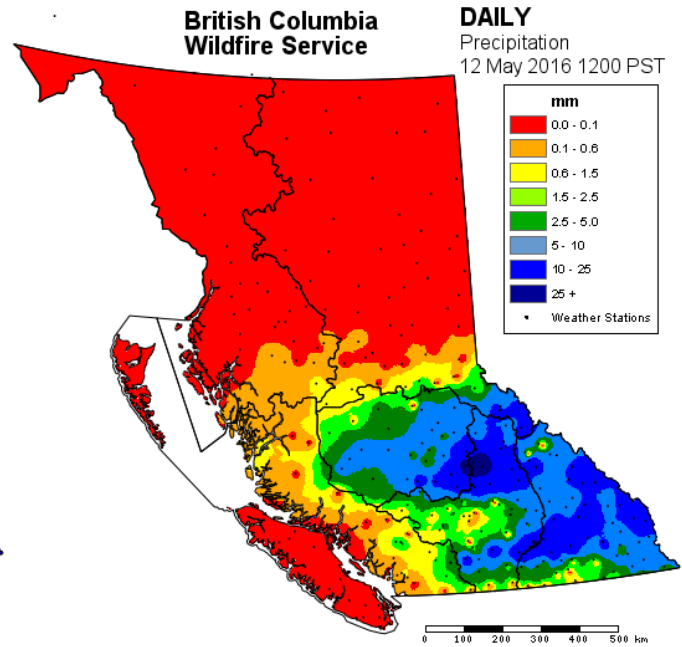
For more information about wildfires visit:

www.bcwildfire.ca

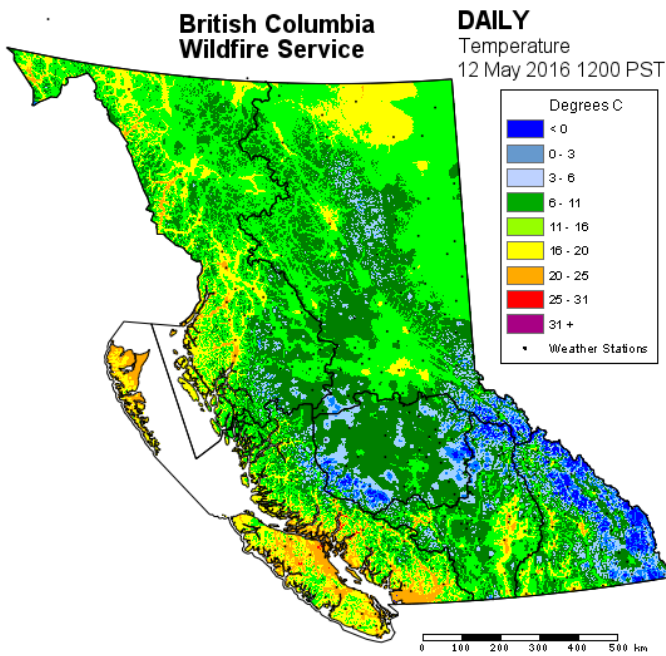
Fire Danger Rating



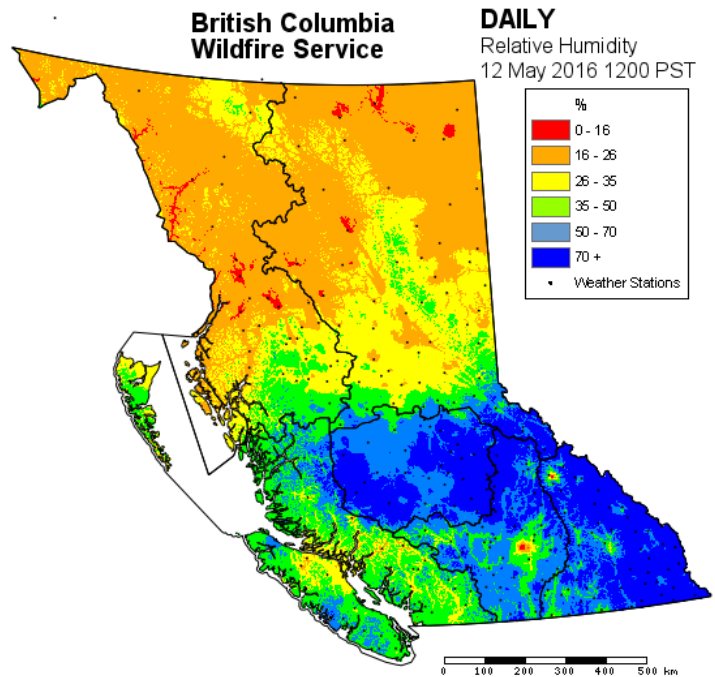
Precipitation



Temperature



Relative Humidity



These maps are current for May 12, 2016.

For the most recent weather maps, please see www.bcwildfire.ca/weather

These maps are for informational purposes only and should not be used to make operational decisions.

Southeast Fire Centre Statistics

Totals since April 1, 2016:

Fires to date: 21
Hectares burned: 85
Person-caused fires: 20
Lightning-caused fires: 1

2015 at this time:

Fires to date: 27
Hectares burned: 43
Person-caused fires: 27
Lightning-caused fires: 0

2014 at this time:

Fires to date: 12
Hectares burned: 33
Person-caused fires: 12
Lightning-caused fires: 0

Most recent forecast for the Southeast

Valid as of Wednesday, May 11, 2016

Low pressure should linger over southern B.C., with variable cloud, scattered showers and afternoon thundershowers across much of the region today. Steady precipitation is expected across sections of the East Kootenay, mainly in the Cranbrook zone. Unsettled conditions will persist tonight, especially across the southern half of the region. Patches of low cloud and fog are likely in some valleys and near the Rockies early Friday. Otherwise, Friday should be dry and mainly sunny. Moderate winds can be expected at times during the next 48 hours. Temperatures across our east today and Friday should be near or cooler than seasonal. Elsewhere seasonal temperatures are anticipated today, while Friday should be a few degrees warmer.

OUTLOOK: High pressure should provide dry and mainly sunny to partly cloudy conditions Saturday and Sunday. There is a chance of cloudy periods and a slight chance of showers or thunderstorms across the south end of the region Saturday afternoon through Sunday. Moderate winds are also likely in some areas on Saturday, more so across our south and east. There is a risk of isolated showers or thundershowers across our west late Monday, otherwise, fairly sunny and dry conditions should persist. Unseasonably warm temperatures, with highs in the mid-20's are likely across our west each day. The east portion of our region will trend warmer, more so Sunday and Monday. Relative humidity could drop as low as single-digit values in some areas each afternoon.

6 TO 10-DAY: Poor to fair confidence, as medium range models are inconsistent. Tuesday appears unsettled or slightly unsettled as an upper trough either continues across the region or just clips the northwest corner of the region. Wednesday could be similar or drier with one system exiting and another approaching from the north or central coast. This approaching system favours cooler temperatures and more extensive showers or occasional rain at times Thursday through Saturday.

CONFIDENCE/DISCUSSION: Fair to good confidence through Saturday. Fair confidence beyond and also still fair on the local coverage and amounts of rain during the next 12 hours. The main band of steady precipitation (5mm to 10mm) should extend from the Crowsnest Pass toward Cranbrook today, where showers are possible this evening. Scattered showers and thundershowers are expected in the West Kootenay zones through mid-evening today, with some cells likely within the boundary zone. Moderate winds may develop in some areas this afternoon through Saturday or Saturday evening.

Prevention is key in withstanding a wildfire. Get FireSmart!

FireSmart® your property

If you wait, you may be too late



Priority Zone 1

HOME / 10 metres

This should be a fire-resistant zone, free of all materials that could easily ignite from a wildfire.



REGULAR MAINTENANCE:

Regularly clean your roof, gutters, etc. of debris.

FIRESMART RENOVATIONS:

As your budget allows, renovate your home with fire-resistant materials, mesh debris screens, a chimney spark arrester, etc.



FIRESMART LANDSCAPING: Keep woodpiles, propane tanks, outbuildings and combustibles at least 10 metres away from your home. Consult the *FireSmart® Guide to Landscaping* for more tips.

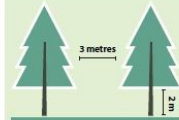


YARD MAINTENANCE: Regularly mow your lawn. Remove deadfall, coniferous trees and other flammable vegetation. Sweep your decks and rake up tree needles, leaves and debris.

Priority Zone 2

10 - 30 metres

Reduce fuels in this area by thinning and pruning vegetation and trees. This will slow a fire's spread.



TREE SPACING:

Space trees at least three metres apart.

PRUNING TREES:

Prune all branches within two metres of the ground.



REMOVE SURFACE FUELS: Regularly clean up accumulations of fallen branches, dry grass, needles and other flammable debris from the ground.



PLANTING NEW TREES: If you're going to plant new trees in this zone, consider planting deciduous species like aspen, poplar and birch. They have lower flammability rates.

Priority Zone 3

30 - 100 metres

Try to thin out trees and other vegetation. This will help reduce a wildfire's intensity and slow its spread.



THIN AND REMOVE CONIFEROUS TREES:

Space dominant trees at least three metres apart, and remove any understory trees that are in close proximity that could act as a ladder for fire to move into the tree tops and spread. Retain deciduous trees which are resistant to wildfire.



NOT YOUR LAND? If there's property within 100 metres of your home that is owned by your neighbours, get them engaged in the *FireSmart® Community Recognition Program!*



GET IN TOUCH: Think your community is at risk to wildfire? Contact your municipal councillor, planning department or fire service to express your concerns.



Ministry of
Forests, Lands and
Natural Resource Operations



LEARN MORE:

BC Wildfire Service: www.bcwildfire.ca
FireSmart Canada: www.firesmartcanada.ca



FireSmart

CONTACT INFORMATION

Report a wildfire

*5555 on a cell or 1-800-663-5555

Wildfire Information Line

1-888-3FOREST

Burn Registration Line

1-888-797-1717

Southeast Fire Information Officer

1-250-365-4014

Visit www.bcwildfire.ca