
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations
and Rural Development
BC Wildfire Service

Boaters must stay clear of firefighting aircraft

CASTLEGAR – The BC Wildfire Service is reminding the public that they must stay clear of firefighting aircraft that are collecting water from lakes in the region, including Moyie Lake, Lake Koochanusa and Premier Lake.

When firefighting aircraft such as airtankers or helicopters are working on an active wildfire and picking up water from nearby lakes, they need plenty of room to manoeuvre to do their job safely. Recreational boaters or people using other watercraft who try to get a close-up look at these aircraft present a serious safety risk for air crews and anyone else in the area.

This behaviour is extremely dangerous and interferes with the BC Wildfire Service's ability to fight a fire, since a pilot cannot collect water when a boat is in its intended flight path. Such interference can reduce the effectiveness of fire suppression activities and pose safety risks to both the public and first responders.

If a boater gets in the way of an airtanker, helicopter or other firefighting aircraft, the incident will be investigated by the ministry's Compliance and Enforcement Branch, the Conservation Officer Service and/or the RCMP.

Under the Wildfire Act, the person responsible could face a violation ticket fine of \$1,150 or an administrative penalty of up to \$100,000. The person could also be charged with an offence under the Wildfire Act, which carries a maximum fine of \$100,000.

If recreational boaters interfere with fire suppression activities on Moyie Lake, Lake Koochanusa and Premier Lake, the BC Wildfire Service could implement an area restriction that would ban all watercraft from those lakes.

Members of the public must also stay away from active wildfires. Government officials who are engaged in wildfire control, including firefighters, have the authority to order anyone to leave such areas.

Recent wildfire activity:

As of 2 p.m. Pacific time on Aug. 8, 2017, there were 42 active wildfires in the Southeast Fire Centre. This total includes 17 new fires that were sparked by lightning overnight. None of these new fires are currently threatening any communities or structures.

- Four lightning fires started in the Moyie Lake area. Crews are working to control them with the aid of helicopters, skimmer aircraft, airtankers and heavy equipment. The largest of these four fires covers about five hectares and the smallest covers less than

- one hectare. The fire near the Barkshanty Forest Service Road is currently under control.
- Three small, lightning-caused fires started in the Ladybird Creek area on Aug. 7, about 24 kilometres northwest of Castlegar. One fire is already out, another is under control and the last is being held.
 - Five lightning-caused fires started in the Granby area on Aug. 8. Four of them cover less than a hectare each, while the largest — the Bluejoint fire— covers about 30 hectares. This fire is about 1.5 kilometres south of the border of Granby Park and about 60 kilometres northeast of Grand Forks. Ground crews are fighting these fires with the aid of airtankers and helicopters.
 - Two lightning-caused fires were discovered on Aug. 8 in the White River area, about 38 kilometres northwest of Elkford. One of them is currently being held and the second covers about three hectares. Crews are working on both of these fires.

The Southeast Fire Centre extends from the U.S. border in the south to the Mica Dam in the north and from the Okanagan Highlands and Monashee Mountains in the west to the B.C.-Alberta border in the east. The Southeast Fire Centre includes the Selkirk Natural Resource District and the Rocky Mountain Natural Resource District.

To report a wildfire or open burning violation, call *5555 on a cellphone or 1 800 663-5555 toll-free. For the latest information on current wildfire activity, burning restrictions, road closures and air quality advisories, visit: www.bcwildfire.ca

You can also follow the latest wildfire news:

- On Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BCGovFireInfo>
- On Facebook: <http://facebook.com/BCForestFireInfo>

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