
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2018FLNR0183-001456
July 23, 2018

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

Use of drones strictly prohibited near wildfires

CASTLEGAR – BC Wildfire Service staff were forced to temporarily halt air operations on the Wilson Creek wildfire on Sunday, July 22, 2018, due to people operating unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, or “drones”) above the fire.

A helicopter that was supporting ground crews was grounded. Additional firefighting aircraft working on other fires in the area had to be diverted from their flight paths to avoid the airspace around Little Wilson Lake area, which is about 19 kilometres east of Nakusp.

The airspace around Little Wilson Lake is once again clear for firefighting aircraft to operate. The RCMP is working with the BC Wildfire Service to investigate this incident.

The use of drones near a wildfire is illegal. The restricted airspace includes a radius of five nautical miles around the fire, and to an altitude of 3,000 feet above ground level.

The presence of drones near an active wildfire can slow down, or completely shut down, aerial firefighting efforts, due to safety concerns. If a drone collides with firefighting aircraft, the consequences could be deadly.

Under federal regulations, anyone caught operating a drone within an active wildfire could be fined \$25,000, or jailed for up to 18 months.

The use of UAVs or drones near or on a wildfire is also considered to be “interference,” as defined in Section 56 of the provincial Wildfire Act. Operators are subject to a violation ticket fine of \$1,150. If convicted, the operator could be fined up to \$100,000 and/or face imprisonment of over a year.

The Southeast Fire Centre extends from the U.S. border in the south to 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.

Report a wildfire, unattended campfire or open burning violation by calling 1 800 663-5555 toll-free, or *5555 on a cellphone. For the latest information on current wildfire activity, burning restrictions, road closures and air quality advisories, go to: <http://www.bcwildfire.ca>

You can also follow the latest wildfire news:

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

Contacts:

Carlee Kachman
Information Officer
BC Wildfire Service
Southeast Fire Centre
250 365-4056

Ashley Davidoff
Information Officer
BC Wildfire Service
Southeast Fire Centre
250 365-4014

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect