

# WILDFIRE Seasonal Outlook



BC Wildfire Service

MONTHLY UPDATE

August 10, 2020

## FIRE SEASON SUMMARY

The 2020 B.C. wildfire season has been wetter than normal with limited amount of drying days with the exception being the second half of July. Southern B.C. had several warm and dry days which allowed smaller fuels to dry out. The result was several lightning-caused ignitions where steep slopes and smaller fuels drove the spread of these fires. Suppression activities were successful as larger fuels had not yet had a chance to fully dry.

Since the beginning of August, the BC Wildfire Service has responded to 96 new starts, due primarily to thunderstorms across the southern half of the province. Previous rainfall and effective initial attack response resulted in only five of those fires growing over one hectare in size. As of Aug 9, 2020, there are 26 active fires – 18 of which are classified as Under Control, seven are Being Held, and one is Out of Control.

Since August 9, 2020 there has been 369 wildfires across the province, significantly less than the 624 wildfires recorded by the same time in 2019. Historically, August has more wildfires than July as wildfire weather indicators have had the chance to build over the duration of the summer. Further wildfire starts and their risk of spread will depend on the amount and duration of rain the province sees over the upcoming weeks.



### PREDICTED FIRE CONDITIONS



Normal



Above normal

## STATISTICS TO DATE

2020 WILDFIRE SEASON (April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021)	369 WILDFIRES	AVERAGE NUMBER OF WILDFIRES				
		5-YEAR AVG.	10-YEAR AVG.	15-YEAR AVG.	20-YEAR AVG.	25-YEAR AVG.
		1084	1003	1140	1166	1142
847 HECTARES BURNED	AVERAGE NUMBER OF HECTARES BURNED					
	5-YEAR AVG.	10-YEAR AVG.	15-YEAR AVG.	20-YEAR AVG.	25-YEAR AVG.	
	224,408	155,739	123,362	107,085	90,737	

## REST OF THIS MONTH

Current fire weather and available fuel indices are about three weeks behind normal August conditions, which supports the slower fire season we are currently experiencing. Weather models are forecasting cooler temperatures and possibly a continuing wet pattern for August.

These expected conditions will slow the growth of indices, particularly in the south, and maintain below-normal fire behaviour conditions for this time in the wildfire season. The BC Wildfire Service expects continued initial attack and sustained action success during this period. Nonetheless, extreme care should be taken in areas where drying continues to occur.



## PREPARE FOR FIRE SEASON

Consider implementing FireSmart homeowner guidelines. Simple measures, such as clearing leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks, prevents embers from igniting your home. Implementing FireSmart guidelines around the structure ignition zones can make a significant difference to the resiliency of homes and communities when faced with a wildfire event.

For more information on how to establish wildfire resiliency in our forests and communities, visit:



[bcwildfire.ca](http://bcwildfire.ca)



[firesmartbc.ca](http://firesmartbc.ca)



[BC Wildfire Service](#)



[BCGovFireInfo](#)

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## PREDICTING FIRE SEASONS: WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE FIRE BEHAVIOUR?

The science of fire behaviour prediction is based on an understanding of what factors influence the chance of a wildfire starting and how a wildfire will grow once started. The BCWS focuses on three factors which are weather, fuel and topography and when combined, make up the **fire behaviour triangle**.

- Weather – wind is the biggest driver in weather as it increases the amount of oxygen available to the fire. As wind increases, so does fire intensity and spread rates. Warm, dry conditions also support wildfire growth and development.
- Fuel – green living vegetation has a hard time igniting due to the moisture content in the plant. Dead plants can't regulate their moisture content and will dry at different rates depending on size and weather. Smaller fuels, like grass, will dry out faster than heavy fuels such as stumps.
- Topography – fires grow faster uphill due to hot air rising and drying out fuels ahead of the fire. Additionally, fires will also increase in intensity and spread with steeper inclines, especially on south or south westerly facing slopes.

All factors interact together to impact fire behaviour differently depending on location in the province and time of year.

## THE FIRE BEHAVIOUR TRIANGLE IN 2020

The 2020 B.C. wildfire season has been wetter than normal with limited amount of drying days with the exception being the second half of July. Southern B.C. had several warm and dry days which allowed the smaller fuels a chance to dry out. This resulted in several lightning fires occurring in these areas. The spread of fires in these areas was driven by fires occurring on steep slopes in smaller fuels. Suppression activities were successful as larger fuels had not yet had a chance to fully dry.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CATEGORY 2 AND CATEGORY 3 BURN PROHIBITIONS?

A Category 2 open fire is an open fire, excluding a campfire, that burns piled material no larger than two metres high and three metres wide, or grass over an area less than 0.2 hectares (2000 square metres) in size.

A Category 3 open fire is a fire that burns material in piles larger than two metres high and three metres wide, windrows, or grass over an area larger than 0.2 hectares (2000 square metres) in size. Anyone lighting a Category 3 fire must first obtain a burn registration number by calling 1 888 797-1717. These numbers are logged into the Open Fire Tracking System (OFTS) along with details about the registered burn.



Figures 1: Photo one: V60740, Aug 7, 2020. Fire burned on steep slope through slash. You can see fire perimeter aligns with changing vegetation at top of picture.



Photo 2: V10874 Aug 3, 2020. Photo of fire burning on a slope. Spread slowing as fire grew into the surrounding trees.

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