
INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2019FLNR0035-000487
March 26, 2019

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

Overwintering fires, hot spots may reappear this spring

KAMLOOPS – As warmer weather returns to parts of the province affected by last summer’s wildfires, the BC Wildfire Service is advising British Columbians that some hot spots could re-emerge due to what are called “overwintering” fires.

An overwintering fire can occur when a wildfire that burned deep underground last year has continued to smoulder all winter long. Given the extent and intensity of many wildfires in the summer of 2018, some of these residual hot spots could flare up with the arrival of warmer and drier weather this spring.

Most overwintering fires will occur well within the original fire’s perimeter. Many areas near communities where wildfires burned last year are being actively patrolled by firefighters and scanned using thermal imaging technology.

It is standard practice for the BC Wildfire Service to monitor previous wildfire sites to ensure that any flare-ups from overwintering fires are located and suppressed if necessary. However, members of the public are encouraged to report any wildfire or smoke they see, even if it is located within the perimeter of a previous fire.

To report a wildfire, unattended campfire or open burning violation, call 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, visit: <http://www.bcwildfire.ca>

Follow the latest B.C. wildfire news:

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

A FAQ backgrounder about overwintering fires follows.

Contact:

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BACKGROUND

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Frequently asked questions: overwintering fires

What is an overwintering fire? Why might it emerge with the arrival of warmer and drier weather?

- An overwintering fire is a remnant of previous wildfire activity that can burn deep into the ground and smoulder, even while showing no visible signs of activity above ground.
- Overwintering fires can remain dormant and undetected all winter long, but hot spots may re-emerge with a return to warm and dry weather conditions.

What are the visible signs of an overwintering fire?

- Given the large size of many wildfires in B.C. last year, some wildfires burned deep into organic soil layers, increasing the likelihood that overwintering fires will emerge in the spring.
- The most common visual signs are smoke, smouldering ground or open flame within the wildfire's original perimeter (the outer boundary of a fire).

What should be done if wildfire activity is seen?

- Any perceived wildfire activity should be reported, even if it is within a previous wildfire's perimeter. Call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone.

What kind of suppression response will the BC Wildfire Service provide for overwintering fires?

- The BC Wildfire Service monitors former wildfire areas and any renewed activity will be assessed.
- In many cases, an overwintering fire will emerge deep within the original fire's perimeter and can be monitored by the BC Wildfire Service while it extinguishes itself naturally.
- If an overwintering fire emerges in an area containing unburned fuel or poses a potential threat to communities, infrastructure or natural resources, wildfire crews may be dispatched to extinguish the hot spot to ensure the fire does not spread.

Could an overwintering fire pose a threat to communities?

- The majority of overwintering fires will remain well within the original fire's perimeter.
- Overwintering fires present a limited risk to communities, since previous wildfire areas near communities have been scanned using thermal-imaging technology and were patrolled extensively by firefighters.
- However, any wildfire activity should be reported, even if it is within a previous wildfire

perimeter. Call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone.

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