



Information Bulletin

Extreme Heat Wave Causes High Risk of Fire and Health Concerns

Abbotsford, July 28, 2009 – Current weather conditions have resulted in a higher risk of fire in Abbotsford's natural areas.

The public are asked to refrain from smoking or using lighters or matches on trails, in or near forests or other vegetation. If an active or smoldering fire is found, please call the Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service immediately at 911.

All person-caused wildfires are preventable. Person-caused wildfires can be caused by abandoned campfires, smoking, logging, brush or range burns, construction, recreation and arson.

Earlier this week, Environment Canada issued a weather advisory for the forecasted heat wave along with information on health and safety, poor air quality and risk of fire in extremely dry conditions.

Environment Canada offers the following tips for dealing with the heat, poor air quality and reducing risk of fire.

Coping with the heat

- NEVER leave children alone in a parked car. Temperatures can rise to 51.7 C (125 F) within 20 minutes in an enclosed vehicle when the outside temperature is 33.9 C (93 F). Leaving the car windows slightly open or "cracked" will not keep the inside of the vehicle at a safe temperature.
- Drink plenty of water and don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. Talk to your doctor if you are on water pills or currently limiting your fluid intake.
- Avoid sunburn stay in the shade or use sunscreen with SPF 15 or more.
- To keep cool on hot days, stay indoors in air-conditioned facilities or take a cool bath or shower. At indoor temperatures above 35 C, fans are not effective at preventing heat-related illness.
- Limit daytime outdoor activity to early morning and late afternoon.

- Avoid tiring work or exercise in the heat. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of non-alcoholic fluids each hour.
- Check regularly on older people, and those who are unable to leave their homes, for signs of heat-related illness.

There are a variety of mild to severe symptoms linked with heat-related illness, including thirst, dizziness, confusion, weakness and fainting/collapsing. These are especially likely to occur in the elderly and in persons with chronic conditions who are exposed to the heat.

For more information on heat-related illness, please call BC HealthLink at 811 or visit www.bccdc.ca.

Coping with poor air quality

Air pollution can contribute to negative health effects ranging from increased respiratory symptoms to hospitalizations and premature deaths. According to health researchers, children, the elderly and people with a pre-existing cardiac or respiratory illness are most at risk. As the air quality deteriorates you may consider reducing or rescheduling or avoiding strenuous activities outdoors especially if you are experiencing symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

Reducing the risk of fire

- Do not discard smoking materials from vehicles, use interior ashtrays.
- Lawn & farm equipment should have properly working spark arresters to prevent sparks from exiting through the exhaust pipes.
- All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) produce an enormous amount of heat and can ignite brush from their exhaust systems.

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For more information contact:

Tracy Klassen

Manager, Communications

E: tklassen@abbotsford.ca

Tel: 604-864-5564