

UBC Recommendations for Field Teams Working in Hot weather and High Wildfire Danger - Summer 2021

1. Resources

Websites and apps to check:

- **Local weather conditions**
 - Check the daily forecasts for heat, thunder/lightning/smoke and plan early morning starts (e.g., 5am) to avoid the afternoon peak in daily heat
 - Be on high alert if temperature >30°C, RH < 30% and wind > 30kph; monitor smoke and the location and spread of local fires under these conditions
 - Be particularly cautious if dry lightning is forecast in your area
 - Make a plan to get updated weather info from check-in person when you can't access the internet
 - Under high or extreme fire danger don't stay overnight in areas without cell service/internet
- **BC Wildfire**
 - **Fire Danger Ratings**
Scroll to the bottom to the Fire Centre you're working in and find the fire weather station nearest you. Pay attention to numerical classes 4 (high) and 5 (extreme) (ignore the colours)
 - **Fire Bans & Restrictions** by Fire Centre
 - Although 2021 field work does not include high risk activities, modify work hours when fire danger 4 (high) or 5 (extreme) according to the [guidelines](#) on next page
- **BC Wildfire app** - download on your phone and the iPads. Set your home area and make sure notifications are enabled
- Register for **Emergency Notification System** for your **Regional District**
- Directory of municipalities, regional districts, First Nations, improvement districts, and related organizations. [CIVICINFOBC](#)
- Evacuation alters/orders, flooding info, etc.: [EmergencyInfoBC](#)
- [DriveBC](#) for up to date highway/road conditions
- [BC Air Quality Health Index](#)
- [FireSmoke](#) for smoke forecasts
- Note local radio stations - they will share also up to date info

Follow [@EmergencyInfoBC](#) on Twitter for the latest disaster information, as well as for evolving and trending hashtags on events. BC Wildfire is [@BCGovFireInfo](#) on Twitter.

Alerts and Bulletins will use the following hashtags on Twitter:

#AMBERalert

#BCFlood #BCStorm #BCWildfire #evacuation

#BCearthquake, #earthquake

#BCtsunami, #tsunami

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2. Wildfire

RESTRICTIONS ON ALL FIELD WORK DURING HIGH + EXTREME FIRE DANGER

Fire Danger Class 4 = High

After 3 consecutive days of class 4, cease activity between 1pm (Pacific Daylight Savings Time) and sunset each day. Resume normal work only after fire danger class falls to 3 (moderate) for 2 consecutive days, or fire danger falls to class 2 (low) or 1(very low)

Fire Danger Class 5 = Extreme

During fire danger class 5, cease activity between 1pm (Pacific DST) and sunset each day. Resume normal work only after fire danger class falls below class 4 (high) for 2 consecutive days, meaning fire danger must be 3 (moderate) or 2 (low) or 1(very low) for 2 consecutive days

Fire Danger Class 5 = Extreme

After 3 consecutive days of class 5, cease activity. Resume work only until 1pm after fire danger class falls to class 4 (high) for 3 consecutive days. Resume normal work only after fire danger class falls to 3 (moderate) or 2 (low) or 1(very low) for 2 consecutive days

Advice during high or extreme fire danger:

- Stay informed - regularly check BC Wildfire Service app and websites
- Keep your vehicle fueled and parked oriented homeward/toward an exit
- Prioritize sites closer to "home" base
- Do not camp with no cell service
- Do not park on high grass/vegetation. Clear the veg with a Pulaski or stomp it down and pour water on it if needed before parking
- Pre-plan alternate exit routes from your site
- Complete a mid-day update via inreach or cell phone to confirm that you are still safe when local fire danger is high or extreme
- Carry at least 5 extra gallons of water and a Pulaski or shovel in case of a fire start

What to do if you see a fire: [Report a Wildfire](#)

- Take GPS point and distance/azimuth
- Note down as much info as possible on location and condition, including:
 - Location, size, rate of spread, fuel, smoke/flame color (take pictures), threat, anyone taking action?
- Report to BC Wildfire Service (*5555 or 1 800 663-5555)
- Notify local community partners/First Nations
 - Make sure you have this contact info beforehand

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3. Evacuation

Note: If an area where you are living or working is put under an *evacuation alert* our UBC policy is that we will leave the area. This allows for a more orderly and safe opportunity to evacuate before it becomes an emergency scenario. Contact ***YOUR SUPERVISOR*** and/or Team leader by text as soon as it is safe to do so.

Evacuation stages:

Evacuation Order: You are at risk. Leave the area immediately.

Evacuation Alert: Be ready to leave on short notice. If you leave before or during this alert, it's called a voluntary evacuation. NOTE: If you leave your home during an Alert, and conditions change to an Order, you may not be permitted to return to the house.

Declaration of Local State of Emergency: Declared by a local government when an emergency or disaster within its jurisdiction requires access to the extraordinary emergency powers of the Emergency Program Act.

Evacuation Rescinded: All is currently safe and you can return home. Stay tuned for other possible evacuation alerts or orders.

What to do under “Evacuation Order”:

- **Leave the area immediately.** Choosing to stay puts yourself and others in danger
- Close all doors and windows
- Follow instructions on [where to go](#) provided by your Local Authority or government
- Visit [Emergency Info BC](#) or follow [@EmergencyInfoBC](#) for news and updates
- Wait for the evacuation to be rescinded before returning home

What to do under “Evacuation Alert”:

- Pack a “go bag” with all valuables and essential items
- Be prepared to evacuate at any time. If told to evacuate, do so
- Monitor local radio stations for up-to-date information on the fire and possible road closures
- Park your car, positioned forward out of the driveway. Keep car windows closed and have your valuables ready to be packed in your car should you need to evacuate
- Move all combustibles away from the house, including firewood and lawn furniture. Move any propane barbeques into the open, away from structures
- Ensure that you keep all important documents and information with you as you may not be able to return home if the alert is upgraded to an order

Preparing your house to evacuate for wildfire:

- Gather your [grab-and-go bags](#), emergency plan, copies of important documents and cherished mementos. Have them at the front door or already packed in your vehicle
- Ensure your vehicle has fuel. The tank should always be at least half-full
- Move patio furniture, cushions and door mats indoors

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- Take down flammable curtains and window treatments
- Connect garden hoses and fill large containers with water, such as pools, hot tubs and garbage cans. This can assist firefighters and help slow advancing flames
- Ensure your house number is visible. This will help firefighters locate your home quickly
- Disconnect automatic garage door openers so doors can be opened by hand if you lose power

Evacuation with trailer:

- If you have a longer time to evacuate safely, hook up the trailer and bring it with you
- If you have a “short” time to evacuate safely, leave the trailer
 - Take all valuables and important personal belongings
 - Disconnect the fuel
 - Place the propane tanks and generator far from the trailer

4. Hot weather

Advice for staying cool:

- Start your day early to avoid the hottest afternoon hours (e.g., work 5am to 1pm)
- Stay out of the sun as much as possible
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat, lightweight, loose-fitting clothing, and sunscreen
- Avoid strenuous activity and exercise (where possible)
- Drink plenty of fluids such as water before you feel thirsty, make sure you're getting electrolytes
- Dampen washcloths, hand towels with cold water to make a cool compress

Recognizing symptoms and signs of heat-related illness and heat exhaustion:

- Extreme thirst
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Weakness
- Fainting
- Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- Nausea and vomiting

Untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heatstroke, which is a life-threatening condition. If you suspect heat exhaustion, take these steps immediately:

- Move the person out of the heat and into a shady or air-conditioned place.
- Lay the person down and elevate the legs and feet slightly.
- Remove tight or heavy clothing.
- Have the person drink cool water or other nonalcoholic beverage without caffeine.
- Cool the person by spraying or sponging with cool water and fanning.
- Monitor the person carefully.

Contact a doctor if signs or symptoms worsen or if they don't improve within one hour.

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Call 911 or your local emergency number if the person's condition deteriorates, especially if he or she experiences:

- Fainting
- Agitation
- Confusion
- Seizures
- Inability to drink
- Core body temperature — measured by rectal thermometer — of 104 F (40 C) (heatstroke)

5. Smoke

Wildfire smoke is a complex mixture of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and gases, such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds. Wildfire smoke causes episodes of the worst air quality. More info from [BCDC Wildfire Smoke](#)

- Smoky air makes it harder for your lungs to get oxygen into your blood
- Wildfire smoke can irritate your respiratory system and cause an immune response, which may lead to inflammation that affects other parts of your body
- Common symptoms include eye irritation, runny nose, sore throat, mild cough, phlegm production, wheezy breathing or headaches. Such symptoms can usually be managed without medical attention.
- Seek prompt medical attention if more severe symptoms occur, such as shortness of breath, severe cough, dizziness, chest pain or heart palpitations
- Smoky air may increase risk of some respiratory infections, such as pneumonia or COVID-19

Mitigating the risk associated with wildfire smoke:

- If working outside, physical exertion can increase air intake as much as 20 times. Drink lots of water and take regular breaks. Consider the direction of smoke forecast and work earlier in the day if possible to minimize exposure.
- Stop or reduce your activity level if breathing becomes uncomfortable or you feel unwell. Stay cool and drink plenty of fluids.
- If you have asthma or other chronic illness, carry any rescue (fast-acting) medications with you at all times and activate your personal care plan that has been designed with your family physician.
- In vehicles, keep windows closed and operate air conditioning in “recirculate” mode – make sure to open windows when smoke conditions improve to prevent carbon dioxide buildup.
- Monitor your symptoms. People respond differently to smoke.
- Mild irritation and discomfort are common, and usually disappear when the smoke clears.
- Exposure to wildfire smoke and the virus that causes COVID-19 can both result in respiratory symptoms such as a dry cough, sore throat, or difficulty breathing. Use

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the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool to help determine whether you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.

- If you are unsure whether you need medical care, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.
- If you are experiencing difficulty in breathing, chest pain or discomfort, or a severe cough, contact your health care provider, walk-in clinic, or emergency department. If you are having a medical emergency, call 9-1-1.

Check the [Air Quality Health Index \(AQHI\)](#)

The AQHI is measured on a scale of 1 (low) to 10+ (very high). The AQHI index values are grouped into four categories that help you to easily and quickly identify your level of health risk:

- Low Health Risk: AQHI values from 1 to 3
- Moderate Health Risk: AQHI values from 4 to 6
- High Health Risk: AQHI values from 7 to 10

Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

Carefully consider interactions of smoke and heat by adjusting work hours or selecting sites with easy access (short hikes on low slopes).

- Very High Health Risk: above 10 (A very rare occurrence usually connected to wildfire smoke)

Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.

- Carefully consider interactions of smoke and heat by adjusting work hours or selecting sites with easy access (short hikes on low slopes) or substituting indoor work.

Contact numbers: YOUR SUPERVISOR or Team Leader (make sure everyone has shared cell numbers)