



BC Wildfire
Service



BRITISH COLUMBIA
FireSmart™

Open Burning Practices for Farmers and Ranchers

DID YOU KNOW? Category 2 and Category 3 open fires are responsible for the second-most human-caused hectares burned in British Columbia in the last five years. Follow the guidelines below to ensure that your open burn is conducted safely.

IMPORTANT: It is the responsibility of the individual who is conducting an open burn to ensure that it's done in a safe manner and in accordance with regulations and any current burning restrictions. Do not burn when a fire ban is in place. In addition, if fire use restrictions are implemented in your area, failure to fully extinguish any existing open burning projects is subject to enforcement under that restriction, as well as cost recovery on any incidents originating from this open burning. Anyone found in contravention of an open burning prohibition may be issued a violation ticket for \$1,150, required to pay an administrative penalty of \$10,000 or, if convicted in court, fined up to \$100,000 and/or sentenced to one year in jail. If the contravention causes or contributes to a wildfire, the person responsible may be ordered to pay all firefighting and associated costs.

LEARN MORE ABOUT FUEL BREAKS AND FIRE EXTINGUISHMENT

'Policy 9.12 – Open Fire' provides guidance on certain requirements under the Wildfire Regulation for the safe use of open fire, including fuel breaks, preventing open fires from becoming out of control, burn registration numbers and documenting extinguishment. Refer to pages 2-3 for information on using fuel breaks. Refer to pages 4-5 for information on confirming the extinguishment of a Category 3 open fire.

Find 'Policy 9.12 – Open Fire' here:
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/wildfire-status/about-bc-wildfire-service/bcws-policies/policy_912_open_fire.pdf

DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF AN OPEN BURN, THERE ARE DIFFERENT STEPS TO FOLLOW

Use the table below to identify the Category of open burn you are conducting based on the descriptions in the left column. Read the reference information provided in the right column to learn about how to conduct the burn safely.

OPEN BURN CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS	REFER TO:
CATEGORY 2: - Material in one pile not exceeding 2 metres in height and 3 metres in width. - Material concurrently in 2 piles each not exceeding 2 metres in height and 3 metres in width. - Stubble or grass over an area that does not exceed 0.2 hectares.	'Category 2 Open Fire Brochure' here: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/wildfire-status/fire-bans-and-restrictions/category-2-brochure.pdf
CATEGORY 3: - Material concurrently in 3 or more piles each not exceeding 2 metres in height and 3 metres in width. - Material in one or more piles each exceeding 2 metres in height or 3 metres in width. - One or more windrows, none of which exceed 200 metres in length or 15 metres in width. - Stubble or grass over an area exceeding 0.2 hectares.	'Category 3 Open Fire Poster' here: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/wildfire-status/fire-bans-and-restrictions/category-3-open-fire-poster.pdf
CATEGORY 4: - Unpiled slash over an area of any size, or - A fire that is not a Category 1 campfire or Category 2 or 3 open fire and is lit, fueled or used for silviculture treatment, forest health management, wildlife habitat enhancement, fire hazard abatement, ecological restoration or range improvement. - Learn more about prescribed fire in B.C. at prescribedfire.ca.	These activities require a formalized burn plan and approval from BC Wildfire Service and land managers. Contact your local fire centre or zone for more guidance and support (contact info on pg. 2).

BURNING WINDROWS

- » A windrow is a pile of cut hay, grain, leaves, or other materials that are left to dry or to be swept by the wind.
- » Never burn in windy conditions.
- » Avoid building windrows in areas of deep organic material (muskeg, rotten log decks, boggy areas, etc.) where a fire can burn deep into the duff layer (the layer of partially or fully decomposed materials in the ground).
- » Avoid pushing dirt into windrows. This decreases the amount of oxygen available to the fire, leading to slower and incomplete combustion, more harmful pollutants, and increased likelihood of windrows continuing to burn under the ground's surface all winter long.
- » Use a brush rake or excavator to build windrows whenever possible. This helps keep dirt out of the rows and encourages better burning.
- » Pack the windrows as tightly as possible while still allowing airflow through the windrow during drying and burning.

BURNING GRASS AND STUBBLE

- » Avoid burning grass or stubble in the heat of the day. Whenever possible, burn in the evening.
- » Never burn in windy conditions.
- » Burn larger fields by working on smaller sections individually, with fire guards built around each section.
- » Situation dependent, it is best practice to commence ignitions on the downwind side of your unit or field. Working from the edges against the wind can reduce the chances of escape and may also result in more complete combustion of the grass or stubble.
- » Ensure that you have adequate supervision, manpower, equipment and water nearby to control the fire (or extinguish it if necessary).
- » Never leave a burn unattended. Maintain a patrol on your fire until it is completely extinguished.

QUESTIONS ON HOW TO CONDUCT A BURN PROPERLY?

If you need help or advice to plan your burning activities, you can reach your local Fire Zone Office by calling your Fire Centre:

Coastal Fire Centre	(Parksville) 250 951-4222
Kamloops Fire Centre	(Kamloops) 250 554-5500
Southeast Fire Centre	(Castlegar) 250 365-4040
Cariboo Fire Centre	(Williams Lake) 250 989-2600
Prince George Fire Centre	(Prince George) 250 561-4628
Northwest Fire Centre	(Smithers) 250 847-660

BURNING PILES

- » Whenever possible, burn piles when there is still snow cover and the ground is frozen.
- » Re-pile and re-burn, if necessary, until the entire pile is gone.
- » A hot fire produces less smoke – build piles to allow air flow and good combustion. Create a stable 'haystack' like structure that does not have long sloping pile shoulders/sides.
- » Avoid building piles in areas with buried organic matter material (muskeg, rotten log decks, boggy areas, etc.) or deep organic soils (peat areas). These can create deep burning and underground smouldering, which can then reignite in warm, dry, and/or windy conditions.
- » Never leave a burn unattended. Maintain a patrol on your fire until it is completely extinguished.
- » When you've finished burning the pile, check the burn site for hot spots. Hot spots may continue to smoulder (long after the surface fire appears to be out) and could flare up again.
- » Check the sites of your burn piles to ensure that they are completely extinguished. Piles can continue to burn under a layer of snow all winter long.

For more information on pile construction, refer to pages 5-10 of the 'Wildfire Risk Reduction Pile Construction and Burning Guidance' here:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/wildfire-status/prevention/fire-fuel-management/fuels-management/wrrpileconstructionandburningguidance_final_2023_june_06.pdf

CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO OPEN BURNING

Seeking alternatives to open burning improves air quality and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Understand how the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (OBSCR) will apply to your open burn in 'Open Burning Alternatives: Managing Vegetative Wastes on Farm' here:

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/strengthening-farming/farm-practices/min_agriculture-open_burning_alternatives.pdf

MORE INFORMATION

To report a wildfire or open burning violation, call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or *5555 on a cellphone.

BC Wildfire Service general information: www.bcwildfire.ca

FireSmart BC general information: www.FireSmartBC.ca

FireSmart farm and ranch wildfire preparedness:

<https://firesmartbc.ca/farm-and-ranch-wildfire-preparedness/>