



NEWS RELEASE

PVFD.ca

July 30, 2015

It's Still Extremely Dry Out There...

With the recent upgrade on July 29 to extreme fire danger rating for the mid Island region, the Parksville Volunteer Fire Department is anticipating a standby duty crew will staff the fire station beginning Sunday, August 2 and will be in place until the fire danger rating is downgraded.

Fire danger ratings are updated by the Provincial Wildfire Management Branch. Extreme fire danger rating is explained as *extremely dry forest fuels and the fire risk is very serious. New fires will start easily, spread rapidly and challenge fire suppression efforts. General forest activities may be restricted, including open burning, industrial activities and campfires.*

Our region is experiencing drier than normal conditions for this time of the year causing the wildland interface areas to become extremely volatile should a fire start in the area. Recent fires in Dashwood and Coombs areas were examples of how quickly fire could spread and the importance of getting crews on scene as early as possible. The emergency operations centre was activated for the Coombs fire which had the potential for surrounding areas to be evacuated. The Parksville Fire Protection Area has been fortunate to date as there have been several areas which have the potential for fire.

Statistics show the majority of emergency calls are between 9 am and 6 pm and forest type fires burn most vigorously during the same hours. The addition of a four person crew from 10 am to 6 pm during periods of extreme fire danger can make a significant difference in response time to an incident – on average, about five minutes. This quicker response is the best way to help ensure fires are actioned when still small. The daytime is often also when the availability of volunteer firefighters is at its lowest because members are most likely at their day jobs outside of the Parksville Fire Protection Area.

Over the past few weeks, the PVFD has responded to many bark mulch fires alongside buildings, most caused by carelessly or improperly discarded cigarettes. Because of the dry conditions, residents are encouraged to move the bark mulch away from any buildings to prevent combustion.

The PVFD, along with the other fire departments in District 69, have worked together to set up a coordinated response plan for the District. District 69 departments include Parksville Volunteer Fire Department, Errington Volunteer Fire Department, Dashwood Volunteer Fire Department, Coombs-Hilliers Volunteer Fire Department, Nanoose Volunteer Fire Department, Qualicum Beach Fire Department, Bow-Horne Bay Volunteer Fire Department and District of Lantzville Fire Rescue.

The PVFD wishes to remind residents and visitors, the campfire ban is still in place and will remain in place until further notice. All open burning, including campfires, is banned in the City of Parksville and the surrounding fire protection area. The fire protection area encompasses the City of Parksville, French Creek areas bordering the City of Parksville to the edge of the fire protection area at Johnston and Drew Roads, San Paniel, and Fourneau Road and Martindale Road areas.

This ban applies to open fires of any size, campfires, fireworks, firecrackers, sky lanterns, tiki torches, burning barrels and binary exploding targets. All other types of open fires remain prohibited throughout the Coastal Fire Centre's jurisdictional area including backyard burning or land-clearing burn piles. The ban does not apply to cooking stoves that use gas, propane or briquettes, or to portable campfire apparatus with a CSA or ULC rating using briquettes, liquid or gaseous fuel that are not capable of producing a flame longer than 15 centimetres. Portable campfire apparatus which do not meet these conditions are prohibited.

With the BC Day long weekend approaching and weather predicted to be warm and dry, fire prevention is essential. Residents should be aware of potential fire hazards and should not hesitate to call the fire department with concerns.

Resources/information:

- Parksville Volunteer Fire Department <http://pvfd.ca>
- BC Wildfire (campfire bans) <http://bcwildfire.ca/hprScripts/WildfireNews/Bans.asp>
- BC Wildfire (fire danger rating) http://bcwildfire.ca/Weather/Maps/danger_rating.htm
- Costal Fire Centre (fire danger rating) <http://bcwildfire.ca/hprScripts/DgrCls/index.asp?Region=2>

Phone numbers:

- To report an open fire call 250 248-3242
- To report a fire emergency call 911
- To report a wildfire in non-incorporated areas, call 1 800 663-5555 or *5555 on a cellphone

For more information:

- Fire Chief Doug Banks 250 248-3242
- Deputy Fire Chief Marc Norris 250 248-3242
- Assistant Fire Chief Tyrone Heigh 250 248-3242

