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Wildfire activity within the Kootenay Rockies remains relatively stable, with rescinding of the Lussier River Evacuation Alert marking a positive step in suppression efforts. However, Environment Canada and BC Wildfire Service are forecasting hot temperatures, dry thunderstorms and gusty winds over the coming days, creating conditions favourable for new wildfire starts. This issue brief provides an overview of current conditions, the evolving wildfire risk profile and preparedness resources to help tourism partners review plans before conditions change.

Current Conditions

Current wildfire activity within and adjacent to the Kootenay Rockies remains relatively limited, although several incidents continue to be closely monitored.

The Regional District of East Kootenay has rescinded the [Evacuation Alert](#) for the [Lussier River Wildfire](#), reflecting continued progress on suppression efforts. The fire remains active but is classified as Being Held, meaning it is expected to remain within its current perimeter while BC Wildfire Service crews continue suppression activities. Residents and visitors may continue to see smoke in the area as crews work toward full control.

South of the Canada-US border, the [Upper Smith](#) wildfire in the Idaho Panhandle has increased in size to approximately 567 acres. The fire continues to burn in steep, rugged terrain northwest of Bonners Ferry, influencing suppression efforts. A Complex Incident Management Team has been ordered and is expected to assume command later this week, reflecting expectations that suppression efforts will continue over an extended period. These teams provide additional operational and logistical capacity for larger or more complex incidents requiring sustained management.

While wildfire activity within the Kootenay Rockies remains relatively limited, localized smoke has affected air quality in parts of the region, including the Creston Valley, and cross-border incidents such as the Upper Smith wildfire in Idaho continue to be closely monitored for any changes that could affect visitors, businesses or travel conditions.

Taken together, these incidents illustrate two important themes currently shaping the region: existing wildfires are becoming more stable through suppression efforts, while forecast weather conditions are increasing the potential for new wildfire starts.

Conditions Are Becoming More Favourable for New Wildfire Activity

Although current wildfire activity remains manageable, the environmental conditions that influence wildfire ignition and behaviour are becoming increasingly favourable for new fire starts.

Environment Canada is forecasting daytime temperatures climbing into the mid- to upper-30s Celsius range across much of the region through Thursday, with highs reaching 37 degrees in parts of the Boundary and West Kootenay. Forecasts also indicate the potential for dry thunderstorms accompanied by gusty and variable winds. Although isolated showers are possible, rainfall is expected to be limited and localized, increasing the potential for lightning without widespread wetting precipitation.

BC Wildfire Service has advised that this combination of hot temperatures, dry lightning and gusty winds could lead to a potentially significant wildfire event over the next 24 to 48 hours. Officials have cautioned that dry lightning may produce numerous new wildfire starts while strong thunderstorm outflow winds can contribute to rapid fire growth and unpredictable fire behaviour.

Fuel conditions across the region also remain exceptionally dry. Current Canadian Wildland Fire Information System maps show both the Duff Moisture Code (DMC) and Drought Code (DC) at Very High to Extreme levels across much of southeastern BC. Together, these indices proved an indication of how dry forest fuels have become and the potential for lightning-caused ignitions to become established.

- **Duff Moisture Code ([DMC](#)):** Indicates the dryness of the upper organic layers of the forest floor. Elevated DMC values increase the likelihood that lightning strikes will ignite new wildfires because these fuels are dry enough to sustain combustion.

- **Drought Code (DC):** Reflects long-term drying of deeper organic layers and larger fuels. High DC values indicate prolonged drying and suggest that fires can burn deeper into the forest floor, making them more persistent and more difficult to suppress. Deep-burning fires may also continue to smoulder after initial ignition, resulting in ‘holdover’ fires that become visible days after a lightning event.

These weather and fuel conditions create an environment where new wildfire starts are more likely, existing fires can become more active, and conditions may change quickly with little notice. While it is not possible to predict where lightning-caused fires may occur, the next several days represent a period of elevated wildfire potential across much of southern BC.

What This Means for Tourism Partners

While there is no indication that widespread disruptions are imminent, the current weather pattern provides an opportunity for tourism partners across the region to review preparedness before conditions change.

Periods of elevated wildfire potential can evolve quickly, with new wildfire starts, smoke, access restrictions or evacuation activity developing over a relatively short period of time. Taking time now to review plans, verify communication procedures and refresh key resources can help organizations respond more effectively should conditions change.

Preparedness looks different for every organization. For some, it may mean reviewing business continuity plans or staff responsibilities. For others, it may involve confirming who monitors official information, ensuring visitor communications can be updated quickly, or checking that emergency notification systems and contact information are current.

Operational Readiness

- Review business continuity or emergency response plans.
- Confirm staff responsibilities, emergency contacts and notification procedures.
- Ensure websites, social media and visitor communications can be updated quickly if conditions change.
- Review procedures for responding to smoke, road closures, or evacuation activity.
- Back up important business records and store copies securely in a cloud-based service.

Resource Spotlight: Community Futures BC - Business Continuity Planning

Community Futures BC has developed a free Business Continuity Planning resource designed for organizations of all sizes and can be used whether you are developing a continuity plan for the first time or updating an existing one. The online tool guides users through creating a customized continuity plan and includes practical templates, checklists and planning resources.

[Community Futures BC – Disaster Preparedness & Recovery](#)

The planning tool helps organizations:

- Identify hazards and risks specific to their operations.
- Document critical business information and emergency contacts.
- Develop communication plans for staff, partners and customers.
- Identify strategies to maintain essential operations during disruptions.
- Prepare for the loss of facilities, equipment or other critical assets.

Resources:

Preparedness Resources

- Community Futures BC – [Disaster Preparedness & Recovery](#)
- Destination BC – [Crisis & Emergency Planning](#)

Current Information

- [BC Wildfire Service](#)
- Environment Canada – [Drought Code](#)
- Environment Canada – [Duff Moisture Code](#)

Kootenay Rockies Tourism will continue monitoring wildfire activity, weather conditions and tourism impacts and will provide additional updates as conditions evolve.

**This report includes content generated with AI assistance, with all information verified and approved by Kootenay Rockies Tourism staff. Final content reflects our organization's expertise and commitment to accuracy.*