



Understanding Wildfire Prohibitions and Restrictions

During periods of elevated wildfire risk or active wildfire response, the BC Wildfire Service may issue different types of prohibitions, restrictions and orders under the [Wildfire Act](#). While these measures are all intended to support public safety, wildfire prevention or fire control, they have different purposes and implications.

For the tourism sector, understanding these distinctions is important. The existence of a prohibition or restriction does not necessarily indicate that a destination is closed or that travel should stop. The geographic boundaries, activities affected, exemptions and implications for access vary depending on the type and individual order.

Finding Official Information

BC Wildfire Service publishes current prohibitions and restrictions through its [Fire Prohibitions and Restrictions](#) webpage. Individual orders provide the official geographic boundaries, effective dates, and activities affected. Area Restriction orders typically include a map showing the specific area where access is restricted.

Current wildfire information, including incident status and other response information, is available through the BC Wildfire Service dashboard and mobile app.

When assessing potential tourism impacts, refer to the individual order and map rather than relying on the name or location of the restriction alone.

Area Restriction

What it is:

An [Area Restriction](#) establishes a defined geographic area that people generally must not enter or remain within unless an exemption or authorization applies. Under the *Wildfire Act*, an Area Restriction may be established to limit the risk of a fire, address a public safety concern, or avoid interference with fire control.

Broader meaning:

This is an access restriction, usually connected to public and responder safety, that reduces the risk associated with a wildfire, or allows fire control activities to take place without interference. An Area Restriction may be established even where direct fire suppression activities are not occurring throughout the restricted area.

For example, access may be restricted where a wildfire is being managed in place away from structures or critical infrastructure, or where public access could create an entrapment or other safety risk.

Importantly, an Area Restriction has specific geographic boundaries. It should not automatically be interpreted as a closure of the broader community, destination, backcountry region or travel corridor.

Tourism lens:

Recreation sites, trails, guiding areas or tourism operations located within the restricted area may be affected. Nearby tourism businesses and communities may remain fully operational. Highway travel is generally exempt from an Area Restriction under the *Wildfire Act*, but road access may be affected by separate closures or emergency measures. Always confirm current highway conditions through DriveBC.

For the tourism system, the map becomes particularly important: proximity to an Area Restriction is not the same as being within it.

Communications consideration:

This is where there is significant potential for unintended tourism impacts. Simply communicating that an “Area Restriction is in effect near [destination]” without explaining its boundaries can create

the impression that a much larger area is inaccessible. Communications should therefore pair the restriction with its official map and listed boundaries, and when appropriate, clarify what remains accessible.

Equipment or Activity Prohibition

What it is:

An Equipment or Activity Prohibition restricts specified activities, equipment, materials or substances where their use could contribute to wildfire risk.

Broader meaning:

This is a targeted prevention measure. Unlike an Area Restriction, it does not necessarily restrict people from entering the geographic area. Instead, it restricts the activity or equipment identified in the order.

Tourism lens:

The implications can vary substantially depending on what is prohibited. Some tourism operations may be unaffected, while others may need to modify or temporarily suspend particular activities. This makes careful interpretation especially important.

Communications consideration:

The name of the prohibition can sometimes sound broader than its actual application. Tourism communications should avoid translating a restriction on a particular activity into a general statement that recreation or tourism in the area is prohibited. The individual order should be reviewed to determine exactly what is affected and what exemptions apply.

Wildfire prohibitions and restrictions should be interpreted according to their purpose, geographic scope and operational effect, rather than as a general indicator of destination conditions.

A prevention measure may have little effect on travel while changing how certain activities can operate. An Area Restriction may have significant implications within a defined geographic footprint while having little or no impact immediately outside it.

For tourism organizations, the role is not to reinterpret or replace official direction, but to help the tourism system understand what the official measure means in practical terms. This includes identifying potential impacts on visitor access, tourism operations, recreation opportunities and travel confidence while avoiding unnecessarily broad statements about destinations that remain accessible.