

FOREST SAFETY

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2023 Wildfire Season Shatters All Previous Records

BC is in the midst of one of its worst wildfire seasons to date. As of August 29th, 2023, about 16,000 square kms have burned from over 1,700 fires across the province. Currently about 4,000 firefighters, including many BC forestry contractors, in the province are fighting roughly 409 fires including 191 that are considered out of control and 12 wildfires “of note” that are highly visible or pose a threat to communities and residents.

At a July briefing about the BC fire season, Bowinn Ma, Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness said, “We are anticipating continued extreme fire behaviour, and all of us need to do our part to prevent the situation from getting any worse, no matter where you are in the province”.

But BC is not alone. The federal government is forecasting a “marathon” wildfire season across much of Canada extending well into September as a combination of unusual heat, dry lightning and drought continues to fuel major outbreaks across BC, the Prairies, Northwest Territories and Ontario.

To support the safety of our communities and all of those out working on wildfires, we all need to do our part and ensure we

are not creating additional fire issues on the landscape. We need to prevent human caused wildfires by paying close attention to restrictions and danger class requirements, reporting fires when we see them and ensuring our forestry operations are prepared in the event that a fire starts.

Although officials can’t predict how next year’s fire season will unfold, fire agencies and scientists are warning that tougher and longer fire seasons are ahead. Larger, more aggressive fires are simply reality.

To understand why there has been an increase in fire behaviour in 2023, the BC Wildfire Service released a **video featuring fire behaviour specialist Ben Boghean** who explains some of the underlying conditions that have contributed to the fire behaviour and fire growth that we’ve witnessed so far this year.

BC Wildfire Service has some very valuable videos on their YouTube channel to help explain how wildfires are fought, information on upcoming weather events and updates on current fires burning across the province. **Subscribe to BC Wildfire Service’s YouTube channel** and stay informed on the current state of wildfires across the province.

Welcome to the Fall edition of Forest Safety News, covering news about safety topics in forestry. This is YOUR safety newsletter. We look forward to your input and feedback! Email the editor at editor@bcforestsafesafe.org or call **1-877-741-1060**.

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BC Wildfire Service and WorkSafeBC have many sources where you can find news and information on the current wildfire situation, learn about evacuation orders and find information on prevention and preparedness. Visit, follow, download or subscribe to the following:

- Visit [BC Wildfire Service’s website](#)
- Download [BC Wildfire Service’s FREE Mobile App](#) available in the App Store or Google Play.
- Follow [BC Wildfire Service](#) on Facebook and Twitter
- Subscribe to [BC Wildfire Service’s YouTube Channel](#)
- Download [WorkSafeBC’s Wildfire Resources - Wildfires: Keeping workers safe, Wildfire Smoke FAQ’s, Wildfire evacuation planning](#) 🌲

BC Fire Centre Activity

Fire Centre	Total Fires
All of BC	409
Cariboo	21
Coastal	82
Kamloops	44
Northwest	72
Prince George	130
Southeast	60



What's New

Here is the latest on what we have to offer since June 2023. Find direct links to safety alerts, industry-specific resources, industry information and more to download and/or share with employees, industry and safety peers. And make sure to follow us on social media to stay up-to-date with the latest news. Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

Vancouver Island Safety Conference (VISC) – Saturday, October 28th, 2023 at the Nanaimo Conference Centre. This year's theme is *Navigating the Future During Complex Times*. [Register before September 15th](#) and you'll be entered to win a BCFSC Stanfield shirt and toque.

Leadership in Safety Award Nominations – nominations for leaders in forestry safety. Recognize an individual, crew, team, division, contractor, company, etc. for their commitment to safety in the workplace. Nominations for the Cary White Lifetime Achievement Award, Forest Safety MSP and Manufacturing MVP are now open. Email your nomination to info@bcforestsafe.org.

BCFSC Annual Report and Ombudsperson Report – the 2022 BCFSC Annual Report and Ombudsperson Report is now available on our website. Read them online or download a copy.

Wood Pellets Association of Canada (WPAC) Operator Safety Training Fact Sheet – WPAC and BCFSC have launched an industry-wide initiative that delivers a comprehensive digital e-learning safety training program for plant operators and supervisors across companies.

Training Calendar – Our 2023 Fall Training Calendar is now fully loaded and offers both in-classroom and online courses. We also provide requested training bringing courses directly to your preferred location at a convenient time that works for you.

Safety Alerts – Alerts provide timely information on incidents and issues which cause, or result in, serious or fatal injuries. The alerts we send by email and post on our website are intended to raise awareness and educate industry so we can learn from each other's experience and effort. Here are the latest alerts from BCFSC and industry.

- **BCFSC Safety Alert of the Month** – Innovative Safety Equipment for Field Crews
- **Industry Alert** – Work Safely Around Powerlines
- **Manufacturing Weekly Safety Alert** – Click on the link to see the latest weekly alert

To subscribe to our safety alert emails – [Click Here](#)

WorkSafeBC Bulletin - Plan for and Prevent Wildlife Encounters: Encounters with bears and other animals in wilderness settings have led to serious injuries and deaths in BC. This WorkSafeBC bulletin provides information to help you plan safe work in wilderness areas.

Upcoming Industry Conferences

Wood Pellets Association of Canada (WPAC) AGM & Conference – Sept. 19 – 20, 2023 in Ottawa, ON. For more information on registration and conference details, [visit their website](#).

BC Safety Committee Conference – October 4th, 2023 in Langley, BC. For more information or to register, [visit their website](#).

Industry Links

Shift Into Winter – winter is coming! Make sure you know when you need to install your winter tires and find out more about driving in winter road conditions.

Road Safety at Work – visit Road Safety at Work for resources, webinars, workshops and news relating to road safety for you and your employees.

WorkSafeBC Announcements – check here for the latest information on WorkSafeBC policy and regulation updates, resource development, risk advisories and more.

WorkSafeBC Enews – subscribe to Insight; WorkSafeBC's policy, regulation and research division e-Newsletter, Health and Safety Enews, Young Worker Enews and more.

WorkSafe Magazine – WorkSafeBC publishes *WorkSafe Magazine* six times a year to inform, inspire and provide practical tips on a range of topical occupational health and safety matters. It's free to [subscribe](#) and available online. 📄



Bear and Wildlife Encounters

Bear and wildlife encounters are becoming more of a risk for workers in the field. A recent bear encounter with a tree planter in Northeastern BC has caused concern as wildfires are pushing the wildlife into smaller pockets of viable feed areas increasing the potential for hazardous wildlife encounters in forestry worksites.

As we move into fall with berry season upon us and salmon season on the horizon, wildlife will become naturally more active as they prepare for winter. Their search for food and shelter is an overpowering motivator to be out and about and get into whatever they can if given the opportunity. This inherently increases the risk of human encounters that may have the potential to become life threatening if not managed properly to ensure a safe outcome.

For us, this means an increased risk of finding out these animals have taken up residence around our homes or near our workplaces which can become a serious problem for us and them.

WorkSafeBC has developed a [new wildlife encounter resource](#) that outlines how employers, supervisors and contractors can protect workers from the risks of wildlife encounters. This resource can help employers and licensees plan safe work in wilderness areas by explaining their responsibilities and the steps they can take to manage the risk of dangerous encounters through a health and safety program that considers hazardous wildlife.

We all have a shared responsibility in forestry to keep workers and wildlife safe by understanding that we are working in their backyard.



We must plan and prepare for potential encounters and thoroughly review Emergency Response Plans to ensure effective and adequate plans are in place, especially evacuation procedures should an incident occur.

Working with caution and awareness knowing that you are not alone in the bush will help keep us all safe. 🐻

Wet Roads, Foggy Conditions and Kids in the Classroom

By Michele Fry, BCFSC Communications Director

I don't know about you, but I have a hard time imagining that in the very near future our skies will be dark and grey, our roads will be wet and slippery, and we'll be driving in inclement weather conditions. With dry, hot conditions still upon us, I'm not really wondering where my umbrella is at the moment, I'm still slathering on the sunscreen. But this is BC, and cold, wet, snowy conditions will soon be the topic of conversation in the grocery line-up.

So even though we're running the air conditioning in our cars at full blast right now, we'll soon have to transition from AC to defrost mode. So, let's take a moment to remind ourselves what's on the horizon and what we need to do prepare ourselves for the inevitable change in the forecast.

BACK TO SCHOOL: Next week, the kids are heading back to the classroom. This means more pedestrian traffic, changes to speed zones and school buses on the roads. A good rule of thumb is to expect the unexpected and keep a look out for kids darting from cars, cycling or walking

to school and getting on and off buses. Remember slow down, be cautious and pay extra attention in school zones.

School Zones – The school zone speed limit is 30 km/hr between 8am – 5pm on school days unless otherwise posted. Slow down, be cautious and pay extra attention in school zones.

School Buses - Over 110,000 children ride the bus every school day from September to June throughout BC. Drivers need to remember the rules when it comes to school buses. Be patient, be courteous and respect the rules of the road.

SLOW DOWN - STOP - KNOW THE LAW

- Every time someone doesn't stop for the bus, a child's life is at risk. In BC, drivers are legally obligated to come to a complete stop when approaching a school bus with its red lights flashing whether approaching from the front or rear. Vehicles may not proceed until the school bus moves



on or the driver turns off the lights or pulls in the stop sign.

- If approaching from the front, stop at a safe distance to let children cross the road. Don't move until the lights stop flashing and the bus moves forward.
- All school buses must stop at all railway crossings, so be prepared to stop yourself. The bus does not use its flashing red lights for this, so exercise caution.

School Crosswalks – With school back in session, pedestrian traffic on the roads will increase. In BC, almost 20% of all pedestrian accidents involve children under 15 and about 60% of those

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accidents occur during peak school hours in the morning, noon and late afternoon. We all need to remember that children have a different mindset when it comes to understanding cars and the rules of the road. Young children may:

- Assume cars can stop instantly
- Think if they can see a car, the driver can see them
- Have difficulty judging speed and distance
- Have a field of vision one-third narrower than an adults
- Have difficulty figuring out the direction of sounds
- Be easily distracted, lost in thought, listening to headphones or impulsive
- Have no sense of danger
- Cannot perceive complicated traffic situations
- Overestimate their knowledge and physical strength and speed

Refresh your knowledge on crosswalk rules and regulations. Stay extra vigilant at school crosswalks, yield to all pedestrians at marked crosswalks whether in or out of school zones and wait for as long as it takes for all pedestrians to reach the curb on the other side. If there is a crossing guard, follow their directions.

Foggy / Wet Weather Conditions

It may be hard to envision when it's still hot outside, but no matter what part of the province you live in, fall will bring rain, fog and wind before winter kicks in with snow and icy conditions. Wet roads and reduced visibility will affect the way your vehicle handles so be extra cautious when the rain starts up again.

Driving in Rain - As extended dry spells in BC are now commonplace, substances like oil, grease, rubber & tar form a layer of build up on road surfaces. Inevitably, when the rain starts to fall, this build-up rises to the surface and causes the roads to become very slippery.

But regardless of wet roads after dry spells or continuous rainy/wet conditions, wet roads are directly associated with higher accident rates. Take a look at some of these valuable safety tips to help keep you safe while driving on wet roads.

- Double check your vehicle's equipment - check your windshield wipers. Are they properly installed? Are the blades worn? Do you have the right type to drive in rain and snow? Is your wiper fluid topped-up? Have you checked your tire pressure? Do you have the right tires? Do they have good traction?
- Slow down, maintain a safe distance and avoid heavy braking.
- Turn on your headlights – even in misty or light rain conditions.
- Watch out for standing water – driving through standing water and puddles can not only cause hydroplaning but also hazardous water cascades to passing vehicles that can cause startling windshield blindness.
- Ventilate your car – rain causes humidity levels to rise which can result in foggy interior windows. Set your vehicle's temperature control systems to maximize air flow and position the vents to reduce and eliminate foggy windows.

Driving in Fog – Fog can make driving difficult and dangerous even for a seasoned pro behind the wheel. Driving in foggy conditions requires extra special care and attention. Remember that everyone is having trouble seeing so play it extra safe and follow these safety tips:

- Consider delaying your trip if possible until driving conditions improve.
- If you are on the road, slow down gradually and drive at a speed that suits the conditions. Avoid sudden stops and keep a sharp eye out for brake lights in front of you and headlights behind you by checking your mirrors.
- Make sure the vehicle's full lighting system is on:
 - Use your low-beam headlights.
 - If you have fog lights, use them in addition to your low beams.
 - Don't use your high beams – they bounce back at you, which makes it even harder to see.
- Be patient and remain calm.
- Use pavement markings to help guide you using the right edge of the road as a guide, rather than the centre line.

- Maintain a safe following and braking distance.
- Look AND listen for any hazards up ahead.
- Stay alert and reduce distractions by turning off your cell phone.
- Keep your mirrors and windows dry and clean to maximize visibility.
- Watch your speed and don't pass if its not necessary.
- Pull off the road to a safe location if conditions become unsafe. Put on your emergency flashers, keep your low-beam headlights on and wait for the conditions to improve.

Shift Into Winter

The **Shift Into Winter Campaign** is coming up quickly. As the days get darker earlier, we need to keep in mind that October, November, and December are the most dangerous driving months with almost 30% of all work-related motor-vehicle incidents resulting in injury and time-loss claims occurring during these three months.

October 1st marks the day when we need to dust off those winter tires and get them installed on our vehicles. As a reminder, here are the Winter Tire Regulations:

- BC provincial law requires vehicles to use winter tires from October 1st through April 30th on most highways. The requirement ends March 31st for select highways not travelling through mountain passes or high snowfall areas.
- Drivers are responsible for understanding the conditions on roads they regularly drive, and for equipping their vehicle for those conditions.
- Ensure you're following the rules wherever you drive, check the routes you'll be driving before the October 1st deadline and obey the instructions on roadside signs.

Learn more about winter driving safety by visiting the **Shift Into Winter website** and find out about designated winter tire and chain routes, winter tire regulations and the responsibilities of employers and employees who drive for work. 🚗

VISC is Coming Up October 28th, 2023 – Register Early and You Could Win!

The **2023 Vancouver Island Safety Conference (VISC)** is coming up on Saturday, October 28th in Nanaimo at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre.

This **FREE** full-day, in-person conference is open to all BC forestry workers and features forestry-related safety topics focussing around this year's theme - *Navigating the Future During Complex Times*.

VISC features a variety of engaging speakers, a trade show with targeted forestry-related safety products and services as well as:

- Refreshments and lunch for conference attendees
- 50/50 draw
- A silent auction with proceeds to KidSport Nanaimo
- Door prizes and more

This year's keynote speakers include leadership and safety expert, Allan J. Moore, Leadership Training and Human Development Expert, Alison Granger-Brown, Leadership Trainer and Human Development Expert and Steve Donahue, Author and Narrative Expert.



Allan J. Moore
Leadership and Safety Expert



Alison Granger-Brown
Leadership Training and Human
Development Expert



Steve Donahue
Author and Narrative Expert

Early Bird Registration

Register before **September 15th** and you could win a BCFSC Stanfield shirt and toque.
Register online today to save your spot.

Online registration

VISC registration closes October 13th, 2023

VISC supports the Nanaimo Loaves & Fishes Community Foodbank.
In lieu of a conference fee, conference attendees can bring a non-perishable food item or cash donation.

If you have questions regarding registration or sponsorship,
contact the VISC steering committee by email training@bcforestsafe.org or call 1-877-741-1060.📞

Leadership in Safety Awards Nominations

Leadership in Safety celebrates individual safety achievements in forestry. Award recipients are showcased during the VISC Conference which returns this year on Saturday, October 28th in Nanaimo.

We invite you to **nominate a leader in forestry safety**. Your nomination can be an individual, crew, team, division, contractor, company, supplier, consultant, trainer, etc. that deserves to be recognized for outstanding safety leadership or achievements. There are three award categories for Leadership Safety.

1. Cary White Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award

This special award is presented to someone who has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving

safety awareness, expanding safety knowledge, developing safety skills at ground level and building a lasting culture of safety among BC's forestry workers.

2. Forest Safety Most Valuable Player (MVP)

This award recognizes an individual or group that has made a notable contribution to forest harvesting safety within their operation or company.

3. Manufacturing Safety Most Valuable Player (MVP)

This award recognizes an individual or group that has made a notable contribution to wood products manufacturing safety within their operation or company.

Simply email us your nomination to info@bcforestsafeg.org. Within your email, include:

- Nominee's name (first and last)
- Nominee's Job Title
- Nominee's location and employer
- Nomination Category (Cary White Award or MVP)
- A description of the reason for the nomination (please provide as much detail as possible)
- Your name and email address

Deadline for nominations is September 26th, 2023. 📅

Get Ready for Changes to Workplace Health and Safety Requirements Coming Into Effect in 2024

2024 is only a few months away and WorkSafeBC has some significant changes regarding workplace health and safety requirements.

Effective January 1st, 2024, Return to Work Obligations: Duty to Cooperate and Duty to Maintain Employment will come into effect. The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (No. 2), 2022 (Bill 41) amended the Workers Compensation Act to add a duty to cooperate and a duty to maintain employment meaning an employer and injured worker will be required to co-operate with each other and with WorkSafeBC to facilitate the worker's return to their pre-injury job, a comparable job or other suitable work.

Employers with 20 or more workers will also have a duty under the Workers Compensation Act to maintain employment, by providing accommodation of injured workers, up to the point of undue hardship.

These new provisions will come into force January 1st, 2024. Feedback on these new provisions will be accepted until September 1st, 2023.

As of November 1st, 2024, employers will need to meet new minimum first aid requirements set out in the OHS Regulation. The changes are detailed on WorkSafeBC's website: Part 3 –Minimum Levels of First Aid. We advise all employers to familiarize themselves with these upcoming changes well before the November 1st, 2024 deadline sets in.

Visit WorkSafeBC's First Aid Requirements webpage to learn more about these pending changes. 📄

WorkSafeBC Average Base Rate will Remain Unchanged in 2024

WorkSafeBC has announced the preliminary average base rate for 2024 will remain unchanged at 1.55% of employers' assessable payroll. Consistent with WorkSafeBC's goal of keeping rates stable, this will be the seventh consecutive year the average base rate has remained at this level.

WorkSafeBC has developed a background document that explains how premium rates for employers are determined with some key facts about premium rates.

Learn more about WorkSafeBC's 2024 preliminary rates by visiting their website. 📄

WorkSafeBC Public Hearings and Consultations

Current Consultations

Proposed policies regarding duty to cooperate and duty to maintain employment

Proposed policy amendments regarding chronic pain

Proposed amendments to mental disorder policy

Consultation Deadline

September 1, 2023

October 6, 2023

October 6, 2023