

Community Update



Sept 6, 2023

What goes into a decision to lift an Evacuation Order or Alert?

For many SLRD Electoral Area A residents, this week marks more than 30 days since they have been evacuated from their homes. With cooler temperatures and light rain in the region last week, some are asking when the Evacuation Orders and Alerts will be downgraded.

The SLRD's primary concern is with the safety of residents. Evacuation Orders and Alerts are issued by the SLRD on the recommendation of the BC Wildfire Service when wildfire activity or its related hazards cause an imminent threat to public safety. While the current threat of a wildfire is the primary factor in the decision about whether to maintain or downgrade an Evacuation Order or Evacuation Alert, the decision process also involves detailed safety analysis of a number of related public safety issues.

Prior to downgrading an Evacuation Order or Evacuation Alert, the SLRD Emergency Operations Centre must work with the BC Wildfire Service to consider the following threats to public safety:

- The threat of burned and weakened tree trunks and roots. These "danger trees" can fall at any time, and the risk is amplified with strong winds. The BC Wildfire Service may require significant time to ensure that danger trees are safely felled before community members may re-enter an area.
- The roadways that residents use to access their homes may have been damaged and need repair. The roads may also be in an area where smoke from nearby wildfires can significantly reduce visibility with little advanced notice for drivers. The SLRD works closely with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to ensure that roads are safe for travel before community members may re-enter an area.
- Burning debris may release toxins including cyanide and sulphur dioxide.
- Structures that have been damaged in the wildfire are potentially unstable and can collapse without warning.

Community Update

- Ash pits, which are imperceptible holes in the ground that are created when a tree burns down to its roots, are filled with ash and may contain hot embers beneath the ash. These embers can remain hot for weeks after a fire has passed through an area.
- Residual ash and soot may contain hazardous polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) as well as heavy metals, asbestos, and toxic residue.
- Crews still battling the flames of nearby wildfires may need unimpeded access through residential areas in order to prevent further destruction.

Remember that even with cooler weather and precipitation, the Downton Lake and Casper Creek wildfires are still classified as out of control. This season's drought conditions have caused the fires to burn deep in the ground, which means that a significant amount of precipitation is required before they are fully extinguished.

The BCWS and the SLRD continue to work in close partnership, re-evaluating the need for Evacuation Orders and Alerts as the situation evolves. As was done in the case of Bralorne and in the Seton Portage area earlier this summer, the SLRD will downgrade parts of an Evacuation Order to an Alert when possible. We understand that these are stressful times and that the uncertainty is frustrating. As soon as it is safe to do so, residents will be allowed back into their homes.

Hunting Season

Hunters are reminded that Evacuation Orders, Evacuation Alerts, and area restrictions are in place throughout the SLRD. Hunters will not be allowed into areas under Evacuation Order, Evacuation Alert, or on egress routes that are subject to access control. This includes the entirety of SLRD Electoral Area A and the Hurley River FSR.

Road Closures: Wildfires continue to impact roads in the area, and roads have been closed due to dangerous and unpredictable conditions. Responders in the area have noted some roads are passable one moment and extremely dangerous the next. Please respect closures and protect your safety. The Hurley River FSR is open to emergency responders and residents of Bralorne only. Lillooet-Pioneer Rd 40 west of Moha is currently closed.

All roads within Evacuation Order areas are closed to public travel. Steep slopes affected by wildfire are vulnerable to rolling rocks and trees, impeding the safe passage of vehicles.

Please see www.DriveBC.ca for information about other road closures in the region.

BC Hydro: If you see down power lines, assume they are live, keep a safe distance, and report it to BC Hydro at 1-800-224-9376 or text *49376.

Report Wildfires: If you see a wildfire or columns of smoke, report it immediately to BC Wildfire Service. Call 1 800 663-5555 or *5555 on a cell phone.

Wildfire Update

Weather

Currently a mix of sun and cloud, with variable smoke and haze across the region. Temperatures in the low 20s are forecast today with a minimum relative humidity of 40%. Winds are anticipated to be mainly light, gusting up to 20 km/h in some areas. Increased smoke from fire areas should be expected intermittently. The rest of the week is expected to be warm and dry into the weekend.

Downton Lake Fire K71649

Approx. Size: 9,394 hectares

- Structure protection personnel finished demobilizing equipment from properties in the Tyaughton Lake and Gun Creek areas
- Personnel will be in Gold Bridge today to begin demobilizing equipment
- Crews will remain in the Downton Lake wildfire area in the coming days to monitor and patrol, and respond to any threats to properties, structures and other values
- Infrared scans are being conducted to identify heat around the perimeter of the fire
- Crews are conducting patrols along guards to ensure all hotspots have been extinguished in the Gun Lake Road North area
- Danger tree assessments and falling are ongoing across the fire and heavy equipment remains available to support crews as required
- There are 10 helicopters assigned to the Bendor Range Complex where the aircraft will support firefighting, crew movements, monitoring and response to any new starts
- The Jones Creek fire camp is setup for crews working on the Downton Lake wildfire and is now fully operational

Casper Creek Fire K71535

Approx.: Size: 10,982 hectares

- Demobilization of structure protection equipment at Tsal'ah was completed on Monday
- Crews are focused on locating and extinguishing hotspots in the Mission Mountain Road area and throughout the southwest and northeast sections of the fire
- Expect patrols, monitoring and mop-up activities to continue in the coming weeks
- Danger tree assessments and falling are ongoing across the fire and heavy equipment remains available to support crews as required
- BCWS continues to work with its partners MOTI and BC Hydro to reopen Mission Mountain Road

NEW Nomad Creek K73144

Approx.: Size: 24 hectares

- The BC Wildfire Service is responding to a wildfire detected late Saturday afternoon approximately five kilometres east of Bralorne on the north side of the Kingdom Lake Forest Service Road
- Initial attack crews responded along with multiple aircraft, including helicopters and air tankers
- Aircraft actioned the fire along the bottom of the slope, while firefighters established hoselay south and at the west flank between the fire and the Bralorne community
- On the west side, hoselay was completed Sunday most of the way upslope toward rocky, mountaintop terrain that serves as a natural fire break

Wildfire Update

- Today crews continue working on the east flank conducting direct attacks on the fire's edge and establishing hoselay to construct a 5-foot cold edge
- Firefighters are working upslope from the bottom and down from the top to establish a continuous line, while also patrolling and extinguishing hotspots, pushing 50 feet in from the fire edge.

Latest updates from BC Wildfire Service:

[Downton Lake fire](#)

[Casper Creek fire](#)

The [South Chilcotin Mountains Park and Rec Sites and Trails](#) remain closed.

Current Evacuation Orders and Evacuation Alerts

For current evacuations, see www.slrd.bc.ca for updates

·[Evacuation ORDER - Electoral Area A](#)

·[Evacuation ALERT - Bralorne Area - Electoral Area A](#)

·[Evacuation ALERT - Electoral Area B Yalakom Valley and Bridge River Valley Areas](#)

·[Evacuation ALERT Casper Creek Wildfire K71535 - Electoral Area B](#)

·[Evacuation ORDER Casper Creek Wildfire K71535 - Electoral Area A & B](#)

Returning home after an Evacuation Order is lifted

The SLRD has created a [Returning Home Guide](#) to help property owners re-enter an area impacted by wildfire after the Evacuation Order has been lifted.

The resources previously listed in past Community Updates can now be found in the [Community Update Resources](#) guide.