

Preventing Wildfire Ignitions: Regulation Across Jurisdictions



Preventing wildfire ignitions: Regulation across jurisdictions

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BC Wildfire
Service

Why we're here



Wildfire risk in the
wildland urban interface



Fire growth is driven by
terrain and weather;
wildfires don't stop
because of lines on a map



Jurisdiction determines
responsibility, authority,
consequences



Our shared goals

1. Public safety is our number one priority
2. Strong, functional partnership between the Province and local governments
3. Clear understanding across all our partners of:
 - Who responds when and where?
 - Who makes the laws that prevent wildfires?
 - Who enforces those laws and applies consequences?



This session

Trends in
wildfire causes
across
different levels
of government

Understanding
jurisdiction for
prevention
and response

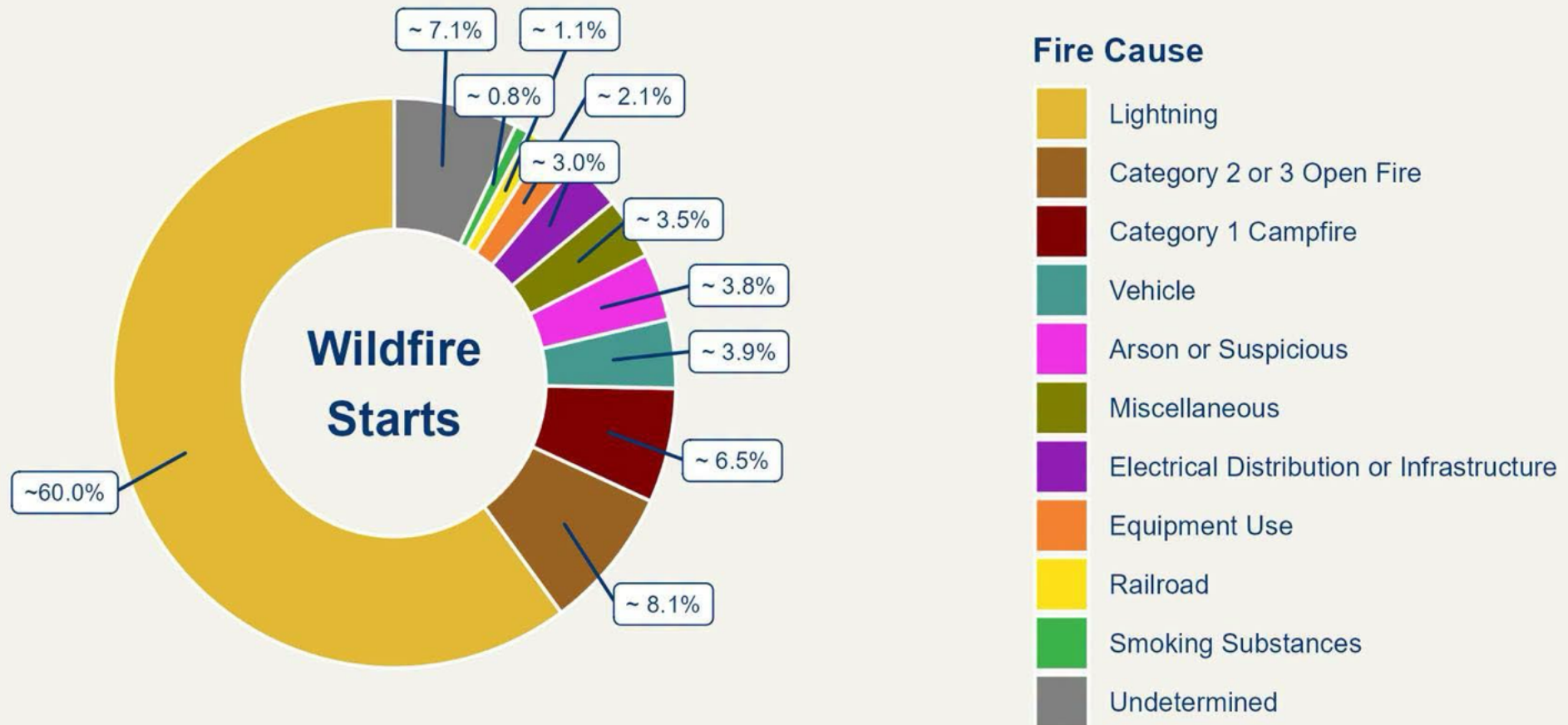
Regulations to
prevent fires at
provincial and
local levels

Consequences
for responsible
parties & cost
recovery
process

What we've
heard from
local
governments
so far

WHAT CAUSES WILDFIRES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA?

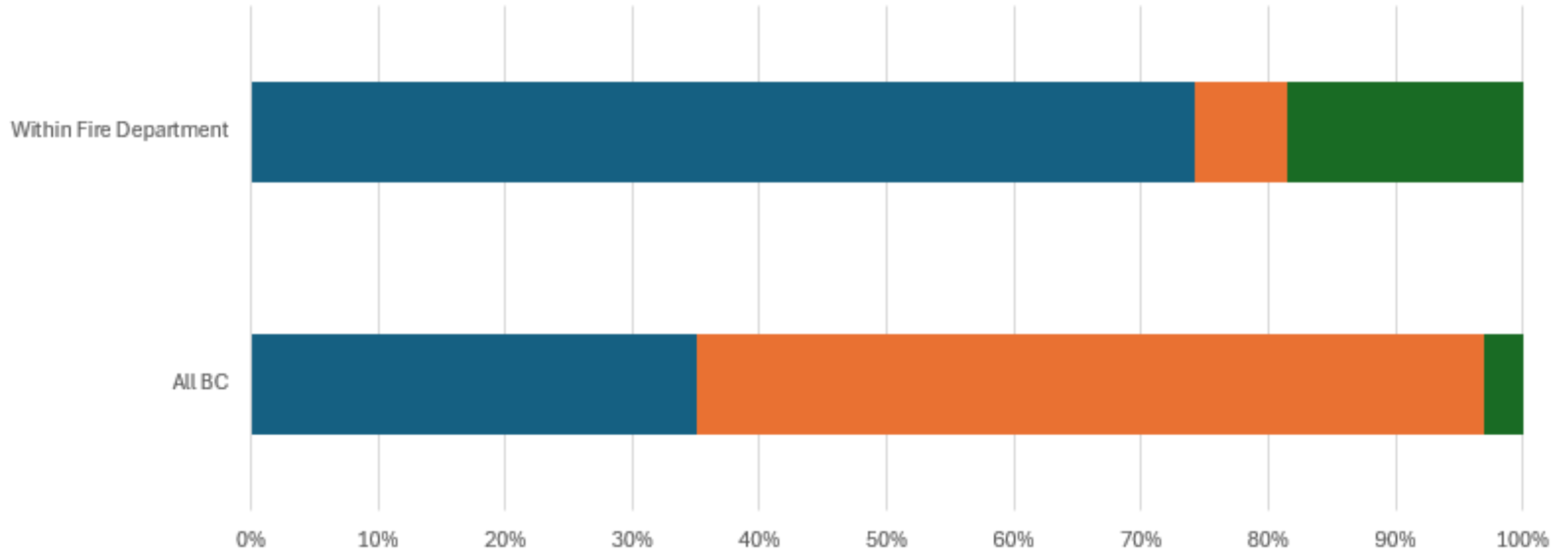
WILDFIRE STARTS BY CAUSE, 2016-2025



What causes wildfires in fire protection areas?

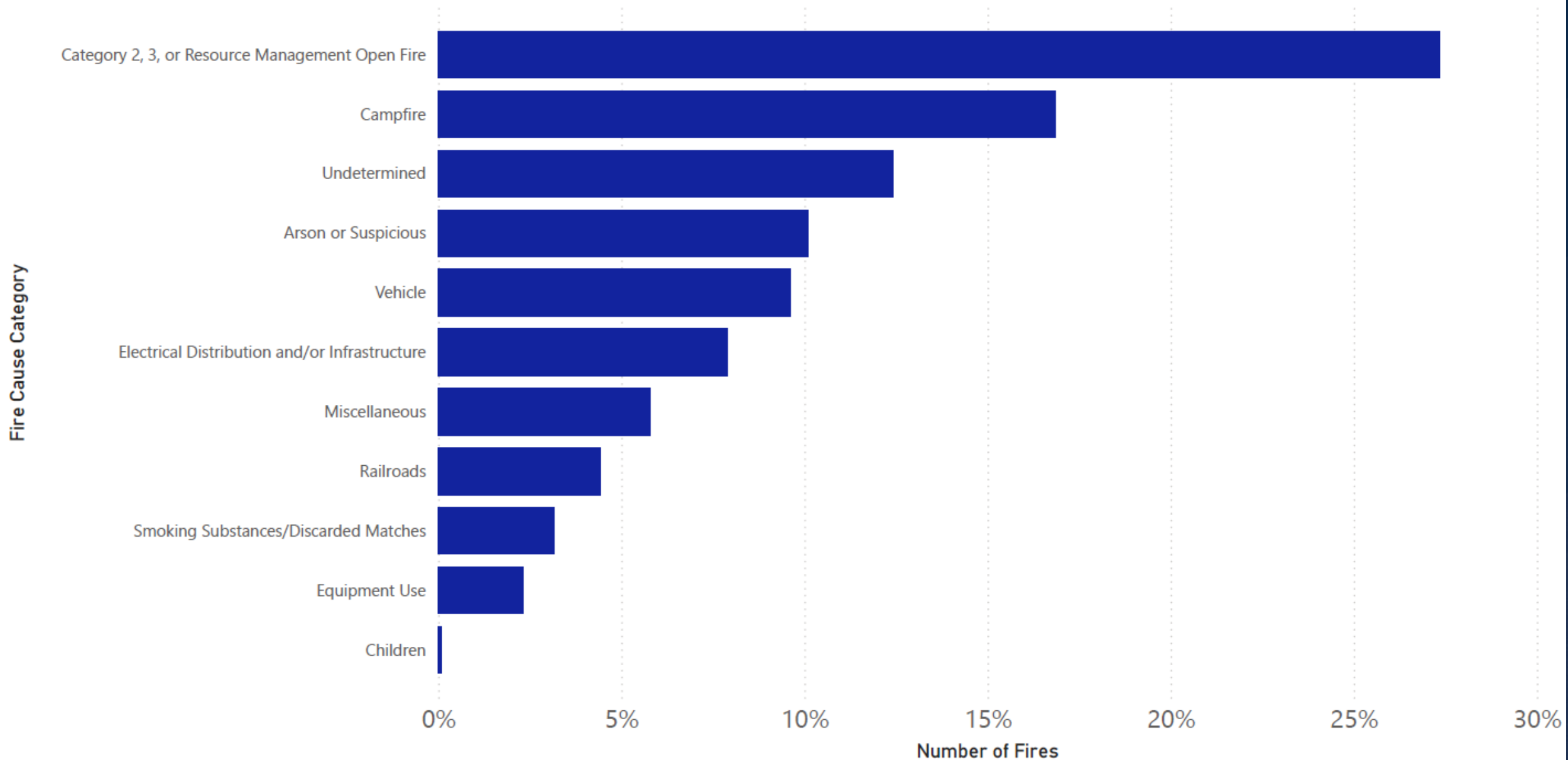
Fires by Cause, 2016-2025

■ Human ■ Lightning ■ Unknown



WHAT CAUSES WILDFIRES IN FIRE PROTECTION AREAS?

Based on BC Wildfire Service data, 2016 - 2025



Jurisdiction - wildfire response



Coordination and cooperation is essential in the wildland urban interface

Inter-Agency Agreement - Fire Chiefs' Association of BC and BC Wildfire Service. In general:

- Local governments responsible within fire protection areas
- BCWS responsible outside fire protection areas
- Mechanisms for mutual aid and assistance

**Between 2016-2025, BC Wildfire
Service responded to (at least)
1,400 wildfires within fire
protection areas.**

**458 (33%) of these were within
municipal boundaries.**

Wesley Ridge Wildfire 2025



Wildfire Act prevention measures



Open fire

- Small scale burning (campfires, piles)
- Large scale burning (grass fires, prescribed fire)



Equipment and tools

- Burn barrels, incinerators
- Explosives, fireworks



Industrial activities

- High risk activities, abatement of woody debris
- Railways, utility transmission operation

Examples of local regulation

*Open Burning in Electoral Areas 'B' & 'C' is closed for the season as of April 30.
Campfires and cooking fires are regulated under [BC Wildfire Regulations](#) and [RDNO Open Burning Bylaw 2514](#).*

Current Fire Restrictions

Recreational fires are currently allowed in the City of Campbell River.

Category 2 and 3 opening burning remains prohibited.

The City of Campbell River follows the lead of the BC Wildfire Service for fire bans and restrictions in the Coastal Fire Centre. Please visit [Wildfire Service – Province of British Columbia](#) for more detailed information.



 City of Revelstoke, BC and Revelstoke Fire Rescue Services
July 17 at 9:00AM - 📍

⚠️ FIRE BAN in place for the City of Revelstoke

Due to the ongoing hot, dry conditions and the increased risk of wildfire, Revelstoke Fire Rescue Services is implementing a Special Occasion Fire (campfire) prohibition within the City of Revelstoke starting today (Friday July 17, 2026) at 12 p.m.

While the Southeast Fire Centre has not yet implemented a campfire prohibition, local conditions within and around Revelstoke have reached a point where additional preventative measures are warranted. The goal is simple: reduce the risk of a human-caused wildfire in and around our community.

Jurisdiction - wildfire prevention

Wildfire Act

- Provincial public safety legislation
- Applies throughout B.C. with some exceptions

Municipalities

- *Wildfire Act* prevention provisions generally do not apply
- Bylaws regulate open fire and other activities that start fires

Regional Districts

- *Wildfire Act* applies, unless there is a fire department and bylaw that meets criteria
- About half of regional districts have wildfire prevention bylaws in some electoral areas

How boundaries shape outcomes



Dotted line and orange fill = fire protection area (fire department boundary)
Solid grey line = municipal boundary

A new bylaw in Hazelton



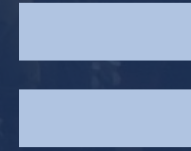
Jurisdiction - financial consequences

**Where
Wildfire
Act
applies:**

Regulation
and
prohibitions



Cost
recovery
and
penalties



Deterrent to
careless
behaviour

Cost Recovery & Penalty Process



Examples in the news

British Columbia

U.S. man loses appeal of \$2.35M fine for starting wildfire in B.C.

2018 wildfire on East Redonda Island burned nearly 660 hectares

Akshay Kulkarni · CBC News · Posted: May 22, 2026 6:08 PM PDT | Last Updated: May 22, 2026



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Small B.C. logging contractor fights \$15M wildfire bill

Jon Sarver claims province failed to consider possibility that arson might have caused 2016 blaze



Jason Proctor · CBC News · Posted: May 02, 2020 6:00 AM PDT | Last Updated: May 2, 2020



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CN fined after sparking nine wildfires near Prince George in 2020

Thirty-nine of the 101 wildfires since 2015 where the B.C. Wildfire Service sought to recover costs were blamed on rail activities

By Glenda Luymes

Published Apr 27, 2023 4 minute read [Join the conversation](#)



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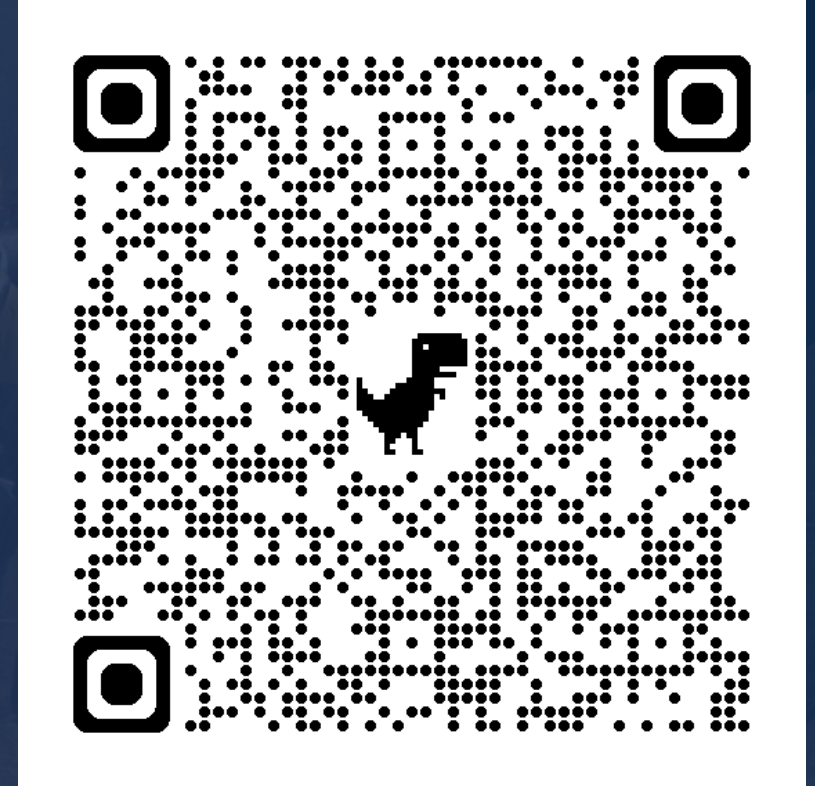
BC Wildfire
Service

Between 2016-2025, 119 cost recovery orders totalling ~\$57 million have been issued under the *Wildfire Act* in B.C.

In the same period, cost recovery was pursued only 11 times within fire protection areas.

2026 Wildfire Act Engagement What We Heard

- Capacity and enforcement are key constraints for implementing wildfire prevention bylaws
- Division of responsibility and authority for regulating activities that cause wildfires is often unclear
- Participants expressed strong interest in more education, guidance and coordination
- Local governments have unique governance and regulatory considerations
- Future approaches should be flexible enough that they respond to the varied needs of different local governments
- Appreciation for open-ended engagement approach with longer timelines



Jurisdiction is often unclear

Division of responsibility and authority for regulating activities that cause wildfires is often unclear

“Does the Wildfire Act apply to Crown land within a municipal boundary?”

“As a citizen and resident, I don’t know what the bylaws are or what bylaws apply.”

“It can be difficult even for fire professionals to navigate the patchwork of regulations and jurisdictions. There is no map or central resource. It may not be reasonable to expect the public to understand regulations.”

Better regulation through education and coordination

Participants expressed strong interest in more education, guidance and coordination

“Enhanced comms and media from BCWS has made a difference.”

“Authority staying within a municipality works for our community but standard bylaw examples would be great.”

“Messaging to the public does not clearly identify that municipalities are responsible for prevention bylaws.”

Appreciation for open-ended engagement approach with longer timelines

Although local governments felt that the framework could be improved, we did not hear calls for large scale or rapid change

"please do stay in the curiosity phase for a while."

"[We are] really appreciating open looped feedback."

BC Wildfire Service is in the early stages exploring potential legislative and non-legislation options to improve the *Wildfire Act*.

What's Next?

Let's talk.

Regional and
Improvement
Districts



Policy feedback:

BCWS.Engagement@gov.bc.ca

Municipalities



Other wildfire questions: FireInfo@gov.bc.ca



Thank you

Questions?



**COMMON
GOOD** UBCM
2026

Vancouver Food Runners

In appreciation of our speakers today and with thanks for your contribution, UBCM has made a donation to the Vancouver Food Runners. Building connections between local businesses, nonprofits, and volunteers to ensure surplus food reaches essential community food programs. Vancouver Food Runners believe in turning surplus food into meaningful change. They believe good food belongs to people, not landfills!