

## REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN

### INFORMATION RELEASE

June 6, 2017

#### **From Floods To Fire: Be Fire Smart!**

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A wet spring and flooding in some areas can make people complacent about forest fires. But high heat, predicted over the next few weeks, will rapidly increase the risk of fires. Everyone is asked to be Fire Smart.

Already this spring wildfires have flared up in the BC Interior. Upland areas are drying rapidly as snow melts and ground water recedes. Spring rain has allowed plants and grasses to grow vigorously. When vegetation starts drying out it will create additional fuel for fires.

B.C. Wildfire Service firefighters have been helping deal with local flooding including sandbagging and setting up Tiger Dams. A forest fire would mean this help would no longer be available. That could negatively affect communities dealing with flooding.

RDOS Chair Karla Kozakevich is incredibly grateful for the efforts B.C. Wildfire Service firefighters have already put into protecting homes in the RDOS.

“Having the support of Provincial firefighters has been a huge help in protecting homes, parks and critical infrastructure,” explains Kozakevich. “But we recognize this help is dependent on them not being called away to deal with a forest fire.”

In British Columbia just under half of all forest fires are human caused. Some common sense steps people can take to reduce wildfires include:

- Never leave a fire unattended. Completely extinguish the fire—by dousing it with water and stirring the ashes until cold—before sleeping or leaving the campsite.
- When camping, take care when using and fueling vehicles, stoves, and heaters. Insure lights and heating devices are cool before refueling. Avoid spilling flammable liquids and store fuel (correctly as prescribed) and away from appliances or sources of heat.
- Do not discard cigarettes, matches, and smoking materials from moving vehicles, or anywhere where they could catch fire. Be certain to completely extinguish cigarettes before disposing of them; preferably in a sealed fireproof can or jar.
- Don't litter or illegally dump materials as these materials can help start fires.
- If you are allowed to burn yard waste, avoid backyard burning in windy conditions. Keep a shovel, water, and fire retardant nearby to keep fires in check. Remove all flammables or garbage from yard when burning.

Home owners are also encouraged to make their properties more Fire Smart. The Regional District can provide booklets explaining the steps that can better protect homes from fire. For more information on being Fire Smart visit [www.firesmartcanada.ca](http://www.firesmartcanada.ca) for resources.

For more information visit the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen website at [www.rdos.bc.ca](http://www.rdos.bc.ca), call 250-492-0237 or toll free 1-877-610-3737.

Regional District Emergency Operations Centre

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