

WILDFIRE

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There has and will be much said about the fires that are causing havoc and ravaging much of the countryside. There will be many discussions and many reflections when we look back, and we will look back, amid a winter that will come. At that time, how we have done, how we have conducted ourselves as the ranching community will be a big part of that discussion. There will be much finger pointing, there will be questions about who or what helped, what did not.

There will be a desire to know who roadblocked, (literally), who facilitated and what specifically was effective and empowering or enabling for the ranching community. There are long days out there and long days in the Emergency Operations Centre. It has been encouraging and of great value to see provincial ministries, ranchers, the BCCA, AgSafe and each one of you cooperating and finding ways to get through this. Great help has come from several key provincial ministries and their people like Sonya

Campbell and Brent Barclay and many others. With great zeal and energy and long days and nights Kevin Boon and his team were able to secure a seat in the Cariboo Regional District E.O.C. and effectively set the stage to establish a method of change and a voice for producers in that arena. We have found ways to say "I can fix that", or "we can get that done", rather than the difficult to hear and at times ridiculous responses that were provided to ranchers in the early going of this major crisis.

Extreme Fire Risk with continued hot and dry conditions



AgSafe has always advised the need for fire suppression capability to be adequate and immediately available.

This producer did that! They had a 500 gallon water trailer, pumps and hoses ready to go. They were able to pull the baler onto the pavement, drop it and had the fire out by the time the 150 Mile House Fire department got there. They are doing a final dousing.

We must do this...our reputations as caretakers of the land in this time and season is under scrutiny, especially as we gain permit access to stay and do these operations. A fire extinguisher is a great start but to stop the grass fires that will spread quicker than you can imagine, additional suppression is a must! If possible a spotter in the area has been suggested by fire officials at this time.



That being said, there are a few key things to consider as we go forward in this still young summer and fire season.....it is a long way from over.

1. You are an ambassador for the ranching community at every point in this difficult time.
2. Remain calm when working through the hoops, BCCA can provide answers and things have gotten done, there is a proven method of helping you.
3. As you go about your tasks, or engage with the threat of fire ensure that someone knows where you are at all times, what you are doing, which way you went and when you will return. Things are very fluid and change quickly.
4. Have a plan for overdue or missing persons.

Communicate with your neighbours, have a meeting and discuss:

- Ensure there is a communications person that makes phone calls, calls out help, keeps tabs.
- Do a community equipment inventory, who has what, how much fuel, where?
- Pre-plan and consider your defense capabilities and lines, fall back zones, escape routes.
- How can you enhance your fireproof efforts?



Communication in all of these events rises as a key and incredibly important issue. Have a community meeting sooner rather than later and ask your AgSafe consultant to help you with this.

"Tough times don't last, tough people do." We will get through this and we will need to be passionate about carrying forward the effort to ensure that we are better at the responses. We must be, as a province, better equipped, trained and able. We really need a militia mentality with a shovel in every closet and an ability to rally people to assist and to respond quickly, safely and efficiently. If laws need to change so be it, the status quo will not get it done. There have been great gains in many areas including the permitting work and the service designations we have been able to secure. Learning, however, must

include the ability to honestly look at what was done well and what was not. It includes recognizing things that worked and fixing the ones that did not. This thing does not end with the first snow fall....it really just begins. The men and women of the Cariboo Chilcotin have responded well, there are many heroic efforts that reflect the reality of what and who the ranching community is. Testimony to those who are, and need to be recognized as an asset to the efforts, not a liability, a key source of knowledge, talent, skill, equipment and supplies that needs continued inclusion not exclusion in this battle.

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