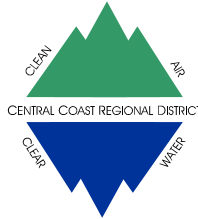


MEDIA ADVISORY



Central Coast Regional District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BELLA COOLA FOREST FIRE & ROAD CLOSURE INFO UPDATE **August 6, 2009 1200 hrs**

BELLA COOLA VALLEY – A local state of emergency continues in Bella Coola. Travellers considering the area as a tourist destination are being strongly advised to change their plans at least temporarily as the region deals with forest fire activity.

Please note: The evacuation order and alert status is being reviewed, and there will be changes made by the end of today. There will be a public information meeting at 6:30 pm tonight to give the locals up-to-date, **accurate** information on the situation. The meeting will be held Lobelco Hall.

ROAD ACCESS

- Hwy 20 at Heckman Pass remains closed in both directions 60 km east of Bella Coola to 16 km west of Anahim Lake because of Forest Fire. A daily, potential one- time piloted opening at 8:00 am is subject to fire assessment. Vehicles must be on site prior to 8:00 am opening. Tourism traffic is discouraged.
- Hwy 20 remains closed in both directions 11 km east of Bella Coola to allow firefighting crews and equipment free movement without endangering any public. Pilot vehicle-lead openings are occurring at 30 minute intervals to allow traffic in and out of Bella Coola townsite day and night.

FIRE CONDITIONS

- Fire response activities are intensive today, with three new 20-man crews bringing the total personnel count 120, which includes specialized attack crews, structural protection crews, and a five-man crew that specializes in night activities.
- There are still serious threats in the area. With three active fire fronts, changing and increasing winds today, and precipitation estimates being pushed back.

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- In the air, the lower valley is busy with eight helicopters circling overhead including a heavy lift Sikorski capable of carrying large volumes of water. Aerial operations were supervised by a lead chopper with all but one medi-vac unit dropping water buckets on the fires.
- The evacuation of 61 homes continues for the 4th day in the area of the Nuxalk Mountain fire. Another 20 homes remain on alert. Fire crews made good progress in completing a fire guard and some resources were able to shift over to the Saloompt fire in the afternoon.
- The Saloompt Mountain fire has been stated as 100 hectares and sits around the 2500' level above 2 residences. Equipment completed a fire guard at Croft Creek while retardant was used to establish another on the opposite side. Access for equipment and ground crews was completed and 1 residence has structural protection sprinklers installed and working.
- The new fire at 'Big rock' in Tweedsmuir Park was extinguished by a small crew mid-day yesterday. The Stuiie fires, high above the Tiny Park community continue to burn and air tankers made two strikes on the blazes during the day yesterday.

The Bella Coola EOC will remain open for information between the hours of 8 am - 8 pm daily until further notice. The contact number is: (250) 982-2691. For further highway information, travellers can also log onto to: www.drivebc.ca.

Updated information can be obtained from the Central Coast Regional District website at www.ccrd-bc.ca under public notices.

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