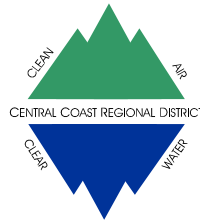


MEDIA ADVISORY



Central Coast Regional District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BELLA COOLA FOREST FIRE & ROAD CLOSURE INFO UPDATE August 15, 2009 1300 hrs

MANGEMENT OF HWY 20 HECKMAN FIRE PASSED TO COASTAL FOREST DISTRICT.

The Cariboo Forest District has literally passed the torch onto the Coastal Fire District with respect to several fires burning near the boundaries of the 2 districts.

Added to the Stuie complex of fires that were previously reassigned, the Heckman Pass Fire affecting traffic on Highway 20 between Bella Coola and Anahim Lake has now been placed under the control of the Bella Coola Fire Base jurisdiction.

While communications have been good between the 2 forest districts, the switch will allow increased dialogue between the Forest Service Base and the Bella Coola Emergency Operations Centre being managed by the Central Coast Regional District.

Fire activity assessments along the affected stretch of Highway 20 will now be performed from the Bella Coola base and their recommendations will be passed along to the Ministry of Transportation who will make the final decision as to when the highway may be fully opened for traffic.

Currently the stretch known as 'The Hill' is closed overnight and open between the hours of 8am and 6pm daily subject to fire conditions.

The Central Coast Regional District Emergency Operations Centre remains open and information is available from 8am to 6pm daily. The number is **(250) 982-0062**

ROAD ACCESS

- Hwy 20 at Heckman Pass remains closed overnight in both directions 80 km east of Bella Coola to 30 km west of Anahim Lake because of Forest Fire. The road will be open between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm subject to fire behaviour. Drivers are advised to follow instructions from traffic control personnel.

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FIRE CONDITIONS



Weather conditions worsen for Bella Coola Valley fires as the trend turns to drier air and moderate winds.

Information on the fires of note is as follows:

* Nuxalk Mountain Fire. This remains 80% contained and crews continue to construct fire guards on the east and west flanks and patrol the interface area along highway 20. De-mobilization is currently beginning. There are 37 ground crew members attending this 368 hectare blaze including 16 local firefighters.

* Saloompt Mountain Fire. This fire is listed as 141 hectares and is now 40% contained. 30 firefighters continue to establish hose lines as fallers assess and remove danger trees along the fire lines.

* Stuié Complex of Fires. These fires are seeing more action today as the fires Service attempts to mobilize 2 Initial Attack crews on the ground. Helicopter attack continues. 3 fires are located on the north side of the highway with the largest being 94 hectares in size. A 4th fire located to the SE of the community of Stuié shows as 52 hectares in size. The fire complex is listed as interface due to the proximity of a Telus microwave station and structures within the tiny community itself.

* Heckman Pass Fire. This fire is currently 2826 Hectares in size now shows 75% contained. Crews are working towards containment on the SW side of the fire. 40 firefighters, 2 helicopters and 7 pieces of heavy equipment are currently assigned to this fire.

* Many other fires in the district are not directly affecting area residents.

There are no evacuation orders or alerts currently in place in the Bella Coola region.

Information on all fires is available through the Ministry of Forests site at www.bcwildfire.ca

The Bella Coola EOC is providing information between the hours of 8 am - 6 pm daily until further notice. The contact number is: (250) 982-0062. For further highway information, travellers can also log onto to: www.drivebc.ca. Information releases are now being issued once daily between 11am and 5 pm as new information becomes available.

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

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