

Backcountry Travel Advisory Issued Aug. 20

1. What is considered “backcountry”?

Primarily, we are talking about forested areas, however, alpine, grasslands and non-productive forestland is also in extreme fire danger.

2. What does the advisory mean to backcountry operators?

For now, it means business as usual – until or unless additional restrictions are put into place. We are asking operators of lodges and outdoor recreational businesses to be especially diligent in their activities and in the reporting of suspicious activities and fires.

3. Are people restricted from accessing these areas?

There is no blanket restriction in place, other than for those areas that are currently experiencing wildfires.

4. Why not a full-out ban?

A full ban would totally restrict all activity in the forest, including commercial campsites, rafting, lodges and eco-tours. It is not our intent at this time to close these businesses. They must, however, continue to be diligent in their activities.

5. Will this escalate into a full ban?

We will continue to monitor the situation and if necessary will put additional restrictions in place. A full ban could be in order if we see an escalation of human-caused fires or if the fire situation in the province continues to escalate such that our resources become so stretched that the recreating public could not be protected from a new fire start.

6. Are you recommending that people who are recreating in the backcountry use only commercial operators or provincial campsites?

To ensure public safety, we recommend that people look to provincial campgrounds and commercial recreational areas. This will allow us to better monitor people’s whereabouts and ensure their safety in the case of new fires starting or existing fires spreading.

7. Why are we doing this? (Issuing the advisory?)

The reason is twofold: to reduce the number of human-caused fires and to ensure the safety of the recreating public.

8. Why are you recording people’s license plates?

Should new fires break out or existing fires escalate, we need to have a means of tracking down those who choose to ignore the advisory and are travelling in the backcountry – to ensure they are safe and out of danger.

9. Do you have the authority to collect the license plate numbers? Doesn't this contravene civil liberties?

We are of the view that we have the authority. Given that the Ministry is collecting the licence plate numbers in order to carry out its responsibility for the protection of people and property from wildfires, we do not see a problem under the legislation with the Ministry collecting the information at this time.

The reason for collecting this information is so the Ministry has knowledge of those that may be in the area should a fire occur. It is part of the Ministry's responsibility to ensure the safety of those who may be trapped by a wildfire.

10. When will the advisory be lifted?

We have no way of predicting how the weather will effect the current fire situation, but we will continue to update the public as conditions change.