



Beach Fire Q&A 2011

COASTAL FIRE CENTRE

Q: What type of open fire is a beach fire?

A: Campfires, including those that are conducted on the beach, are considered Campfires under the *Wildfire Act & Regulation*, if they are:

- "one pile no larger than 0.5 metre in height and 0.5 metre in width and is lit, fuelled or used by any person for recreational purpose or by a first nation for ceremonial purpose."

If a fire is different from the above definition (for example, if it is larger) it is considered a "Category 2" fire.

Although neither of these types of open fires require a permit, fire restrictions can be put into effect in response to fire danger ratings, current types of escaped fires or resource needs elsewhere. For up to date information on any bans and restrictions in your area, go to www.bcwildfire.ca or call 1-888-3FOREST.

Q: Where do the Wildfire Act and Regulations apply?

A: The BC *Wildfire Act* and *Regulations* apply to Crown and private lands outside of fire departments, municipalities, Regional Districts and other local government jurisdictions that have their own open fire bylaws. Within organized areas, fire departments are responsible for initial response to wildfires.

Q: Are people entitled to build fires on the beach?

A: Yes, people have the right to build fires on the beach as long as they are in compliance with either their local government bylaws or the *Wildfire Act & Regulations*. If Campfires are restricted in this area, then a beach campfire fire is also prohibited.

Q: What are the rules that apply to having a campfire (a half a meter by a half a meter used for recreational or first nation's ceremonial purposes)?

A: A person may light, fuel or use a Campfire when:

- the person is not prohibited from doing so under another enactment;
- to do so is safe and is likely to continue to be safe;
- the person establishes a fuel break around the burn area;
- while the fire is burning, the person ensures that
 - the fuel break is maintained, and
 - the fire is watched and patrolled by a person to prevent the escape of fire and the person is equipped with at least
 - one fire fighting hand tool, or
 - 8 litres of water in one or more containers;
- before leaving the area, the person ensures that the fire is extinguished.

Q: What are some safety guidelines when conducting a beach fire?

A: Ensure that you comply with regulations and/or bylaws in your area regarding fire size and safety measures. Always check whether there are any bans or restrictions in effect, and pay close attention to wind conditions before lighting a fire. Keep fires at a reasonable distance from flammable materials and never leave them unattended. As hot coals can easily reignite: use water to extinguish the fire and ensure that it is cold to the touch before leaving it unattended.

Q: Are there any limitations as to where one can conduct a fire on the beach?

A: Unless it is on private land or in an area administered by a third party (i.e., The BC Ferry Corporation), then the public can have a fire anywhere on the beach as long as it is safe and they are complying with the applicable regulations and/or bylaws for the area.



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Q: How far away should beach fires be from private property or dry, grassy slopes?

A: There are no minimum distance requirements to private land or dry, grassy slopes, other than that a person must conduct a campfire in a safe way and take reasonable precautions to ensure the fire is contained within the burn area (a half a meter by a half a meter in height and width).

Q: Are there any prohibited materials that should not be introduced to a beach fire?

A: Yes, petroleum products such as tires are prohibited. Refer to the BC Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation: www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bcairquality

Q: Are there limits on the time of day for which one can conduct a beach fire?

A: There are no time limits on beach fires. History has shown us that fires can escape at any time of the day, so precautions must be taken at all times.

Q: If a fire is started illegally, who is liable for the suppression costs if it escapes?

A: If the fire is started within an organized area, costs are assumed by the fire department (local government) and area tax payers. If it is started outside of a fire department's jurisdiction (crown land), the BC Forest Service responds and assumes costs. If the person who started the fire is caught and found to be in non-compliance with regulations, there are penalties that can be enforced, such as restorative justice, ticketing (fines), cost recovery, or criminal prosecution in serious cases.