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## NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier  
Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource  
Operations

### **Wildfire season is here: Be ready**

PRINCE GEORGE – Premier Christy Clark is reminding all British Columbians of the importance of wildfire prevention in the wake of the 34 wildfires that blazed up in a single day in the northeast earlier this week.

The flare-up of fires was driven by high temperatures and wind, serving as a reminder that wildfire seasons can be unpredictable and start early. The BC Wildfire Service is fully prepared for the 2016 fire season and its crews have been tackling this week's fires head-on, supported by heavy equipment and aircraft.

Given the flexibility that the BC Wildfire Service has built into its contracts, two air tanker groups are now in service ahead of schedule to deal with the unusually quick start to the fire season. Additional airtanker groups will be ready for duty by May 2.

The Province has also increased its commitment to wildfire prevention with the top-up of \$10 million to the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative, bringing the province's total investment to date in this program to \$78 million. The fund was set up in 2004 and is administered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. It helps local governments and First Nations significantly reduce wildfire risks around their communities.

As part of Balanced Budget 2016, the province also invested \$85 million in the new Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. The society will focus on wildfire risk reduction to complement the ministry's existing forest stewardship programs and world-class wildfire suppression capabilities.

Wildfire prevention and mitigation are everyone's responsibility. Rural property owners are encouraged to learn more about the FireSmart program and how it can help reduce wildfire threats on their property. Using common sense and watching for changing weather conditions can also help reduce the risk.

FireSmart activities include:

- Thinning and trimming trees, shrubs and other vegetation
- Removing flammable material from the property
- Ensuring that woodpiles and other easily ignited materials are stored away from buildings and
- Using fire-resistant building and landscaping materials

The recently updated FireSmart Homeowner's Manual provides risk reduction tips and is available online at: <http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/firesmart.htm>

To report a wildfire, unattended campfire or burning violation, please call 1 800 663-5555 toll-free or \*5555 on a cellphone.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Premier Christy Clark –**

“The wildfires in the Peace and across Northern B.C. are a grim reminder that fire season is starting earlier and earlier. Everyone needs to understand the importance of reducing wildfire risks around their homes and in their communities.”

##### **Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson –**

“Wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility of the provincial government, local governments, industry stakeholders and individual British Columbians. I urge everyone to learn more about the FireSmart program and do what they can to minimize wildfire threats near their homes.”

##### **Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour and MLA for Prince George-Valemount Shirley Bond –**

“The BC Wildfire Service is a world-class firefighting organization and I am confident that its fire crews and support staff are ready to handle any situation that comes our way. I am pleased to see all the hard work that they’ve done to protect people and property in the Prince George Fire Centre and elsewhere.”

#### **Learn More:**

For the latest information on current wildfire activity, burning restrictions, road closures and air quality advisories, visit: <http://www.bcwildfire.ca>

The newly updated FireSmart Homeowner’s Manual is available online:  
<http://bcwildfire.ca/Prevention/firesmart.htm>

A poster explaining the different categories of open burning is available online: [bit.ly/1GlhE9I](http://bit.ly/1GlhE9I)

For up-to-date information on current wildfire activity, conditions and prohibitions, call 1 888 3-FOREST, or visit: [www.bcwildfire.ca](http://www.bcwildfire.ca)

You can follow the latest wildfire news on:

- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BCGovFireInfo>
- Facebook: <http://facebook.com/BCForestFireInfo>

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