

Bulletin 2023-08

March 2, 2023

Increased Risk of Wildfire During Drier Seasons

The wildfire season in Alberta is from March 1 to October 31. Oil and gas industry activities are susceptible to fire across all regions of the province. Most industry-related fires in Alberta occur throughout April–June. Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AAF) statistics from 2006–2018 have identified that industry-related brush/grass fires started due to flaring operations, inadequately extinguished old burn/brush piles, and hot vehicle exhausts. As we approach the drier seasons, we remind licensees that the risk of brush/grass fires increases significantly.

The AAF has a tiered fire ban system restricting activities that may cause wildfires in the [Forest Protection Area](#). Fire bans, fire restrictions, off-highway vehicle (OHV) restrictions, or fire advisories are implemented by AAF. The use of OHVs by industry and for recreation is a potential fire ignition source, and the AAF may include their use as a restricted activity. For information on fire ban status and fire advisories across the provinces, visit <https://www.albertafirebans.ca/>.

Proactive fire control measures must be considered, including developing emergency response plans (ERPs) that include wildfire mitigation, prevention, preparedness and response, as well as acquiring and maintaining fire suppression equipment. Emergency planning must address [FireSmart](#) and fire prevention issues. Licensees should communicate with local fire departments to coordinate their mutual aid response during an emergency.

Oil and gas facility flare systems typically have lower throughputs now than their original designs, which leads to carbon buildup on the flare tip that can break loose, fall to the ground, and cause fires. Therefore, operators need to take measures and adhere to a regular preventive maintenance schedule for flare stacks and regularly examine flares for carbon or soot buildup around the flare tip.

Older approved burn/brush piles need to be adequately pulled apart and verified as fully extinguished. Carefully inspect the area in the days and weeks after the burn to ensure there is no possibility of reignition.

To prevent vehicle-related fires, ensure OHVs have spark arrestors inside the muffler to trap any escaping sparks, do not park vehicles with hot exhausts in dry grass areas, and continue to check behind you on a regular basis to make sure nothing has ignited.

Operators and licensees must adhere to AER [Directive 060](#): *Upstream Petroleum Industry Flaring, Incinerating, and Venting* and Alberta's *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*.

Operators and licensees must ensure that appropriate ERPs are in place to guide response to incidents presenting significant hazards to the public and the environment as per [Directive 071](#): *Emergency Preparedness and Response*.

Please refer to the following information sources:

- Current wildlife status in Alberta is available from <https://wildfire.alberta.ca/wildfire-status/default.aspx>.
- Emergency updates for the province are available from the Alberta Emergency Alert website at <http://www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca> or the Alberta Emergency Alert app at <http://www.emergencyalert.alberta.ca/mobile/index.html>.
- Information on hazard preparedness is available from the Alberta Hazard Preparedness website at <https://www.alberta.ca/hazard-preparedness.aspx>.

Even with the best possible planning, fire-related disasters or emergencies often result in the loss of property or life. Emergency preparedness is essential to ensure catastrophic losses do not occur.

Questions regarding this bulletin may be directed to our Customer Contact Centre by phone at 403-297-8311 (1-855-297-8311 toll free) or by email at inquiries@aer.ca.