

May 22, 2011

## Status update on wildfires

### 6:45p.m... Status of wildfires

In the last 24 hours there have been **15** new wildfire starts.

There are presently **44** wildfires in Alberta, **eight** of which are out of control, **10** are being held, **22** are under control and **four** have been turned over. Since the start of April, Alberta has recorded approximately **500** wildfires, which have burned more than **300,000** hectares.

- wildfire in Slave Lake is out of control and has burned approximately 4,559 hectares
- wildfire along south shore of Lesser Slave Lake is out of control and has burned 18,939 hectares
- wildfire 23 km south of Loon Lake is out of control, about 84,700 hectares
- wildfire 15 km southeast of Gift Lake is **being held**, approximately 2,238 hectares
- wildfire 7.5 km northeast of Red Earth Creek is out of control, approximately 19,747 hectares
- wildfire north of Fort McKay is out of control and has burned approximately 8,900 hectares
- wildfire 21 km north of Fort McMurray is being held at 100 hectares
- wildfire 27 km south of Kinuso is being held, approximately 5,797 hectares
- wildfire 7 km north of Janvier is being held, approximately 847 hectares
- wildfire in Richardson Backcountry is approximately **148,000** hectares and burning on both sides of the Athabasca River, classified as out of control

### Firefighting efforts

Province-wide, there are more than **2000** personnel currently supporting Alberta's wildfire suppression operations, including nearly **500** firefighters imported from British Columbia and Ontario. The province has also deployed approximately **140** helicopters, **32** air tankers and scores of heavy ground-based equipment.

A fire ban is in place across the province on all land in Alberta. The fire ban includes a ban on fireworks, is effective immediately and in place until further notice. Exceptions are federal lands (such as national parks) where there are no fire control agreements, and First Nations reserves outside of forest protection areas. Urban municipalities such as cities, towns, villages and summer villages are also exempt. Urban municipalities are encouraged to consider fire bans in their jurisdictions. For current fire ban information, visit [www.albertafirebans.ca](http://www.albertafirebans.ca).

### Road Closures

Travel in and around Slave Lake continues to be restricted for safety reasons:

- Highway 2 is closed west of Slave Lake from Highway 33 to the Town
- Highway 2 is closed east of Slave Lake from the East Mitsue Access into the Town
- Highway 88 is closed north of Slave Lake up to Highway 986, located south of Red Earth

- Creek
- Highway 750 is closed from the Gift Lake Access to Highway 88.
- visibility on Highway 63 up to and north of Fort McMurray remains good with no wildfire disruptions on Highways 63 or 881

Wildfire Road Closure Hotline: **780-644-5653** (to call toll-free, first dial 310-0000).

### **Air Quality**

Due to deteriorating air quality caused by forest fires in northern Alberta, northern residents should take precautions against potential health risks associated with current air conditions. People with respiratory conditions are advised to remain indoors, keep their windows closed and limit outdoor physical activity. People who experience difficulty breathing should consult their physicians. Residents can contact Health Link Alberta to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, toll-free at **1-866-408-LINK** (5465).

### **Safety and Security**

RCMP and Alberta Sheriffs are conducting continual patrols and security checks, and staffing check stops at designated points in the Slave Lake area. Police are securing any items of significant value that have been located in the affected areas, including firearms and safes. These items have been seized by police and taken to a secured location. Homes that were not damaged are being secured to facilitate the protection of personal property. The patience and cooperation of displaced residents is appreciated.

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### **Media inquiries may be directed to:**

Provincial Operations Centre  
Communications  
780-644-4862

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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