

BY [FIRE CHIEF](#) · MARCH 30, 2020

Good afternoon,

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (MoECCS) has issued open burning restrictions for all High Smoke Sensitivity Zones across the province until Wednesday, April 15th, 2020. Attached is the official release that went to media, and it is also posted on the [Air Quality Advisories](#) webpage. These restrictions were put in place by request, and in coordination with, the B.C. Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) to reduce the amount of pollutants from open burning around high population areas. Some key points from the BCCDC regarding pollutants and respiratory viral infections:

- Deterioration in air quality may lead to more COVID-19 infections overall,
- Deterioration in air quality may lead to more cases of severe COVID-19 infections, adding further demand to our healthcare system, and
- Improvements to air quality may help to protect the whole population from COVID-19 and its potentially severe effects.

To be clear, these restrictions are only in place in High Smoke Sensitivity Zones. These zones can be found on the [Interactive Venting Index](#) webpage. MoECCS will be evaluating these restrictions on a daily basis, therefore, the area to which they apply may grow or diminish accordingly. The BC Wildfire Service is working in close coordination with the MoECCS for any further restrictions that may be put in place.

MoECCS FAQs

- **Why are these restrictions only in place in High Smoke Sensitivity Zones?**
 - These restrictions are directly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect pollutants have on viral respiratory infections. These restrictions are in effect for a very specific health related purpose during a time of extraordinary measures from the provincial and federal governments. Therefore, only high population areas are identified at this time to reduce air pollutants in direct response to COVID-19.
- **Am I allowed to burn?**
 - All the restricted areas from this open burning restriction, as well as other restrictions from venting conditions, can be found on the [Interactive Venting Index map](#) which is found on the BC Government website.
- **Could open burning prohibitions (including campfire bans) be implemented earlier (or more widely) than normal to help reduce the number of human-caused wildfires this year?**
 - Every year during the fire season, the BCWS continually evaluates wildfire risks and reviews and adjusts its wildfire prevention measures accordingly. The BC Wildfire Service is monitoring the COVID-19 situation to determine whether it could have an

impact on prescribed burning, wildfire risk mitigation projects, open burning, and any related open fire restrictions. Wildfire activity is currently very low, but as the weeks progress, BCWS will be reviewing its options and advising the public if any changes to open burning practices will be necessary.

- **Are prevention and FireSmart activities still able to take place?**

- Prevention and FireSmart activities can still occur, without burning, during these restrictions using the many alternative ways to dispose of woody debris other than burning.

- **How do I report violators?**

- If the public want to report a contravention they can report it through the MOE RAPP line indicated below or via their website reporting feature: <https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>