



From Bo & Shay and

Sherral, Liz, Brielle & Jace

250 - 566 - 0154



# Wildfire Prepared Appre

### What's in a flame?

### How the BC Wildfire Service predicts wildfire behaviour

By Abigail Popple, Local Journalism Initiative REPORTER, RMG

BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) maintains a comprehensive dashboard of ongoing fires throughout the province, with information on the size of fires, whether they are expected to grow, and a colour-coded map of incidents throughout the province. To learn more about how the Service collects such a wide range of information in the heat of the moment, The Goat spoke with BCWS Predictive Services Specialist Andrew

It all starts with the initial on-the-ground report, says Simpson. Fires can be reported through the BCWS app, or by calling \*5555, and the BCWS makes note of any details offered in the report. Once the Service arrives at the scene, responders contribute photos and on-theground reports to get an idea of how the fire is behaving.

"One of the most valuable pieces of information is the images taken by our bird dogs - the planes that are up there," Simpson said. "Even if we decide that fire is not a suitable target for an air tanker drop, there will still be a flyover with photos taken. Those photos are valuable

Crews who are battling the fire on the ground also report their observations to the Service, but for bigger fires, a fire behaviour analyst is on-site to make

"That's a true specialist in fire behaviour who is looking forward to what the fire may do," Simpson said. "There's two things we look at: 'What's the fire doing on the ground?' And, 'What are the fuel and weather conditions that could drive the fire behaviour?"

Another factor influencing fire behaviour is terrain, Simpson added. This is an especially important consideration in mountainous regions like the Robson

"The very steep, dramatic topography can have dramatic effects on funneling winds," says Simpson. "That's where the observations of someone in the field... can be really useful in confirming – or not – what the

forecasted winds are expected to be."

Wind speed, topography, and fuel availability are all factors takin into account in a mathematical model called the Canadian Forest Fire Behaviour Prediction System, which the BCWS uses to create a forecast of fire

"All our firefighters have basic training in this stuff," Simpson said of the prediction system. "These days we have a Red Book, which is a handbook that sort of guides you through it... It just gives you tables to look up, for example, what the anticipated rate of spread might be on a fire in a particular fuel type with a particular amount of wind. We've also recently created apps that do the same thing - you move some dials on the app and it gives you the same outputs."

The forecasts produced with this model are similar to weather forecasts, according to Simpson: they can give a reliable short-term prediction of a fire's behaviour, but the forecast gets less reliable for longer-term predictions.

In addition to this mathematical model, the BCWS uses computer modeling programs to predict overall potential fire spread. The Service recently added a webbased application that automatically generates modelling for multiple fires in a landscape, according to Simpson.

"It's just another tool. It's not by any means the magic bullet that's going to solve all our problems," said Simpson. "But when things get busy, it does give us the ability to get the kinds of outputs that used to take quite a bit of time to develop."

But even computers aren't foolproof, and the prediction system - which Simpson says was devised decades ago - has its shortcomings. It wasn't designed to factor in long-term drought, which much of B.C. has been facing over the past two years, and there's the chance of human error if someone incorrectly identifies what the fire's fuel

'This is why, when we issue predictions, we never say, 'This is what the fire is going to do.' It's, 'This is what we think this fire has the potential to do," Simpson said. "It's a bit of a science and a bit of an art."







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# ness & Firefighter ciation

# **New equipment for Chu Chua Volunteer Fire Department**

SUBMITTED BY SIMPCW FIRST NATION

The Chu Chua Volunteer Fire Department is a dedicated team composed of members from the Simpcw Nation and the surrounding ranches to the north of our community. We are proud to have a Simpcw employee among our ranks, further strengthening our ties to the community we serve. Our department has recently been equipped with a new Iturri Wildland 3 Bush truck, enhancing our ability to respond effectively to wildfires in the area. Every member of our team is highly trained and actively involved, understanding the critical importance of quick and efficient responses to wildfire threats.

In its fourth year, the Indigenous Initial Attack initiative has set a new provincial standard for Indigenous Initial Attack crews. This program has already proven its worth by responding to multiple wildfires with remarkable efficiency and dedication. In addition to their firefighting efforts, the crew has been diligently working on fuel reduction projects within the Simpcw Territory. This proactive approach not only mitigates the risk of future wildfires but also demonstrates their commitment to the safety and preservation of our lands.

The collaboration between the Chu Chua Volunteer Fire Department and the Indigenous Initial Attack Crew showcases the strength and resilience of our community. By working together, we are able to provide a robust and coordinated response to wildfire emergencies, ensuring the protection of our people, properties, and natural resources. This partnership embodies the spirit of unity and preparedness that is essential for tackling the challenges posed by wildfires in our region.



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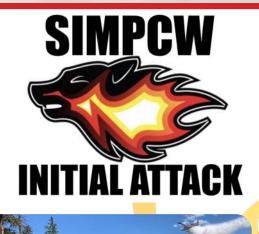
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Members of the Chu Chua Volunteer Fire Department stand with the department's new bush truck. / **SUBMITTED** 



#### THANK YOU

to our Indigenous Initial Attack Team as well as the Chu Chua Volunteer Fire Department for all of their dedication and hard work.



People of the Rivers 7555 Dunn Lake Rd, Barriere, BC www.simpcw.com



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# **THANK YOU** to our dedicated wildfire crew battling flames, smoke & heat!

# Wildfire Prepared

## Option+

10 Thursday July 18, 2024

From Management and Staff at **Valemount IDA Tele-Pharmacy** 250-566-4594 1214 5th Ave. Valemount

# No pet left behind: Are your furry family members evacuation-ready?

By RACHEL FRASER

Pets make everything a little more complicated, and evacuation preparedness in wildfire season is no exception. It's important to plan ahead to ensure that your pets are not an afterthought or an obstacle to getting out safely should a hurried evacuation be necessary.

"Prepare a go bag," said Bill Penhallurick, Manager of Emergency Response at the BC SPCA. "That is the number one thing... Probably the number one reason for people leaving animals behind is that they're not prepared to grab and go with an animal."

Checklists published by the BC SPCA and the Jasper and Valemount Veterinary Clinic recommend the bag contain at least a two-week supply of food and water, and list supplies such as waste bags, a spare litter box and litter, spare collar with id tags, leash and harness. Don't forget to stock up on consumable habitat supplies for small, caged pets. Comfort items such as blankets, beds or favourite toys are also suggested.

Include a first aid kit, any necessary medications, photos and written descriptions of pets, pet insurance information, and vet records, keeping in mind that kennels will require vaccination records.

Dunster-based vet Dr. Tom Vogel, would like cat owners in particular to always know where their pets are when there is the potential for fire. You don't want to be searching for them when time is of the essence.

Factor pet-friendly accommodations into your own evacuation planning on multiple routes, and consider whether kenneling will be required or reliably available. Keep in mind that many pet parents will likely also be evacuating and counting on the same resources. Area kennels and rescues may be overflowing.

Penhallurick says the BC SPCA can help with emergency boarding, emergency pet supplies, animal retrieval, and even care and feeding in place in the case of animals that can't be easily moved, such as aquariums. He said it's best to call the Animal Helpline (see sidebar)

for assistance and direction, rather than drop in at a location that may be busy with many evacuees.

neighbours into your emergency planning in case you are not able to reach your home and pets or require their

The Jasper-Valemount Vet Clinic recommends a health check for your pet, including vaccinations and parasite treatments, in case emergency kenneling becomes

a speedy reunion if the unthinkable happens and you are unexpectedly separated from your pet. The BC SPCA recommends registering your pet's ID with the BC Pet Registry and double checking that your contact information is up to date.

Familiarizing your fur babies with their carriers and practicing evacuation procedures in advance with lots of treats and rewards will make the process speedier and less stressful for all involved in the event of the real

> **Emergency Contacts:** BC SPCA Animal Helpline - 1-855-622-7722

#### **Veterinarians:**

Jasper and Valemount Veterinary Clinic - 1-250-566-4194 / 1-780-852-5551

Dr. Vogel, Dunster – 1-250-968-4477

Valemount Bylaw Enforcement Officer & Animal Control

Clayton Gee – 1-250-566-4435

Incorporate family members, pet-sitters and

Having your pet microchipped or tattooed can ensure







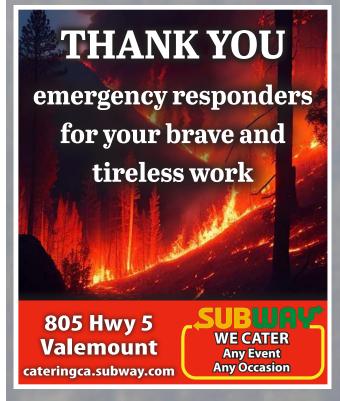
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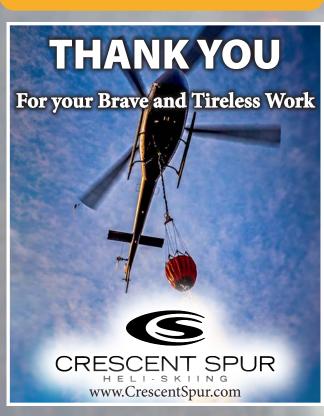
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# ness & Firefighter ciation



Dave Hruby, Fire & Public Safety Educator for the Regional District is now authorized as a Local FireSmart Representative. This allows him to conduct assessments for property owners to identify risks from wildfire. Once an assessment is complete, homeowners can then make decisions and changes to significantly lower the intensity of a fire and improve their home's resiliency. Hruby has planted lilacs (as seen in the photo) as well as cranberry bushes around his own home. These are some examples of fire resilient plants. Hruby says that Art Knapps is their go to for firesmart bushes, trees and shrubs. Anyone wanting to have an assessment done can reach out to either Hruby or the Regional District 250-870-4400. /ANDREA ARNOLD









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Thank you to the selfless community members who make up our volunteer fire departments!

You are appreciated beyond words



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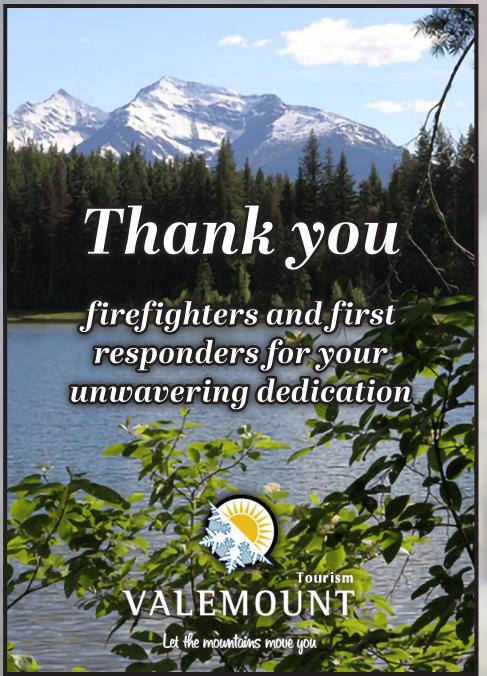
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# Wildfire Pres Firefighter A



Wildfire crews from Robson Valley Fire Zone working wildfire G30612 near Lempiere Creek in June 2023. / BC WILDFIRE SERVICE





# paredness & ppreciation

# Six minutes to lose everything

### Dunster resident recalls her experience with the deadly California Camp Fire

By Kerry Hall

It is not easy to describe to people what it is like to have lost everything in Camp Fire on November 8th, 2018. What immediately strikes most people is the loss of property, pictures, family heirlooms, vehicles, art. Yet what we experienced was so much more than the loss of things. We lost our lifestyle and all that fostered it, habits and routine, pets and hobbies, community, neighborhood, and friends.

By the fall of 2018, we had lived in our home on the mountain ridge for 17 years. We moved from Vacaville, CA when our youngest of four children was just 2 months old. We immediately began to make the house our home, redoing floors, removing wallpaper, replastering walls, and ceilings, painting, and repairing. Outside we tore out overgrown jungles and replaced them with flowering shrubs and groundcover. I collected almost a dozen different varieties of hydrangeas, locally propagated Iris, and heirloom lilacs my mom gave us or that we reclaimed from old area homesteads. Our yard was prime for wildlife viewing and bird watching. We constructed pathways, pergolas, and archways, and planted vegetable, cactus, flower, and herb gardens. A dry rock bed that simulated a creek ran under a footbridge to a small pond. During the unprecedented drought, the fresh water attracted racoons, skunks, deer, and foxes. There were feeders for wild birds, the Steller's Jays I fed by hand. We raised chickens and built them a gorgeous coop and fenced yard.

The morning of the Camp Fire began as most mornings for us. Our daughter Emily was headed to Chico State for class. Dan, my husband was getting ready for work. I was ready to drive our youngest son, Christopher to his recital in downtown Paradise. Chris had been playing guitar with a community musical group and this performance would be evaluated as a graduation requirement. I commented on the steady sound of sirens we could hear going down Pentz, the main road. My husband said he would drive to work that way and see what was going on. I turned on the local Chico radio station to see if anything was being reported; a fire 20 miles away in an area called Pulga. The morning was bright and cloudless, but windy.

We had evacuated with much of the town before, when fire ravaged the neighboring ridge. That time our 90-year-old neighbor, a Macaw parrot, our Springer Spaniel and 4 kids were in tow. We also stayed on the ridge through evacuation warnings when fire jumped the diminishing creek and raced up the ridge a block from our house. Warnings, fires, smoke plumes and water planes were becoming more commonplace every year but especially in a year where we had seen little to no rain for 5 months. 20 miles seemed like a safe

distance away.

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Dan left for work, and we promised to call each other if we heard of any updates. Less than 10 minutes passed when we received a reverse 911 call with an evacuation warning. I immediately called him to come home, the fire was serious, and the wind was blowing our way. He was home within minutes, remarking that he could see flames across the canyon. He decided to take a moment to document the house inside and out on his iPhone, a task that proved invaluable to our insurance claim. He then left to question the neighbor who taught at a Ponderosa elementary school just a mile and a half north on Pentz Road. She said the flames were already at the school and structures were burning. We all stepped outside at this point as if to validate her claim. An enormous black cloud was coming up from the canyon, the threat was real. We wasted no time in gathering ourselves and the dog while hurriedly texting family with updates. By this time the sky had grown dark and the sound of exploding propane tanks was growing louder, the smell of smoke stronger.

Emily immediately went to the basement and retrieved a large suitcase. She would fill it with her diabetes supplies. In the urgency of the moment, her passport,

\$1,000 cash, and plane tickets for her trip to Los Angeles the next day would be an

**CONT'D ON P19** 







### Six minutes Cont'd from P13

expendable afterthought. She loaded her medical supplies in her car and set about to secure our 10-yearold dog Indy, who would ride with her. Chris grabbed one of his guitars and loaded it and his computer into Dan's truck. Dan finished documenting the house and began to gather some tools and guitars. He quickly made sure the chickens had water and food.

I carried my computer to my car and searched for a tote to fill with pictures. As I loaded the albums from the closet, the lights went out. The house was as black as night, and I could no longer see what to grab. At that point the phone rang again with an immediate evacuation notification. There was no more time to retrieve belongings and we would depart with nearly empty vehicles.

Dan and Chris would lead the way out, Emily and Indy next, I would bring up the rear. As we pulled out of the driveway, I looked back at the house framed in the darkening sky. Ashes and embers were falling heavily now, trees and fuel tanks exploding and there was a growing roar of the wind driven fire. We pulled out slowly into the cul-de-sac, visually checking other houses. Our closest neighbor across the street was still hosing down his house, everyone else was gone or going. As we approached the intersection at Pentz, we could see the steady line of cars headed down the hill. It seemed to take forever for a break big enough for us to enter the roadway together. Instinctually I looked north toward Paradise to check for traffic. That's when I saw the wall of black smoke and fire barreling towards us. I absolutely panicked and started to cry and pray out loud that we wouldn't be overtaken and that we would all make it out together. We moved slowly and steadily with traffic for 12 miles, to a four-way stop near Butte college and then continued stop and go until we were over the freeway. Together we pulled off the road to collect our thoughts and look back at the huge black veil that covered the sky. I began to make calls to local hotels and secured a room in Redding for the next two nights (still hoping we would be able to go home within the next day or two). Dan wanted to check in at work and so we drove into Chico. I called friends of ours in north Chico to see if they knew what was going on. Immediately they told us to come and stay with them until the danger passed. Little did we know we would be spending the next 3 weeks with them as we awaited reentry.

Once we were allowed back to our property, we were able to begin the process of recovery. In short, there was nothing to recover. The fire burned so hot and fast there was nothing left. We had some hope after finding our three safes, but looters had beat us to the discovery. The gun safe had been raided of the barrels and remnants, our large personal safe had been pried open and left facing upward so that whatever had survived the heat was ruined by the rain and the small safe was likewise pried open and gutted. We spent a couple days with shovels and sifters looking for anything that survived but soon realized our attempts were futile.

As we picked through the piles of broken dishware, my mother-in-law's collection of State-plates, the Mikasa dinner set that my father-in-law sent back to his wife while serving as a Marine in Japan, mom's depression glass and Royal Copenhagen cups, I had an idea to collect some and make a mosaic. Somewhere during the treasuring, I picked up my melted Stealthcam trail camera that had been aimed at our side yard and I tossed it in the bucket.

I had discovered bear scat on our sidewalk and had hopes of capturing the animal rummaging through the compost bin or visiting the small pond. I drug a

wooden sawhorse down to the pond to mount it on, but the camera hung too low and at an awkward angle, so I opted to secure it to a coastal sequoia near the road. It faced our neighbor's fence, their roofline just visible through the trees, the black compost bin front and center, the bedraggled sawhorse, and another house to the right. The sidewalk and rock creek ran left to right in the frame.

The buckets of dish shards would be shuttled to our new residence in Red Bluff CA, then shuffled from the garage to the house while my husband made room there for a new motorcycle and tools. From the house they would move to the patio while we put in new flooring. They moved back inside last week so we could paint the house. We were making our new house a home; the buckets were in the way, and it was time to start the mosaic project that I had thought about 2 1/2 years ago. I came across the camera and asked Dan if he could get it open and see if the SD card was functioning. I had tried to bang it open once before, but at that point we didn't even own a hammer. It took some force, but he opened it and inserted the card into the laptop. What we saw was both amazing and unsettling.

Real time 9:37 am. The glow of the fire gets brighter as traffic doubles and moves steadily towards the 99 freeway.

Real time 9:38. The gridlocked freeway appears from the dimming light. We decide to take the back way into Chico. The sky turns black as embers float among the treetops. The flames hit the pavement blockade of the street and seem to die. The camera snaps a burst of five pictures during a minute of uncertainty.

Real time 9:39 am. We cross the overpass. All Hell breaks loose in the yard. Fire has likely reached the chicken coop and the back deck. two of my four chickens would survive the fire, one mercifully euthanized shortly after, the other, badly burned and missing her toes, did not survive much longer.

Real time 9:40 am. The compost bin is fully engulfed. A weeping blue atlas cedar tree and an ornamental pine ignite to the right of the screen.

Dan calls me and asks if we should take our chances on finding a hotel in Chico. We agree to pull over and start calling about vacancies.

Real time 9:42 am. Most certainly our house is on fire. We gather outside our vehicles; the wind whipping embers and ash around us and look back at the monstrous black cloud over Paradise.

Real time 9:44 am. The camera drops to the ground and captures the thick black smoke and embers in the treetops.

The camera valiantly snaps one last shot despite the lens and cover having melted inward.

It took 6 minutes for the fire to come over the fence and reach the camera, decimating our neighborhood. While it was sobering to discover these pictures, it was also fascinating and quite eye-opening to finally know what happened in those last moments. The day before the fire I wrote a quote on the blackboard at school, "Failure isn't fatal but hesitation can be." Little did I know how prophetic those words would be.

The Camp Fire remains one of the costliest, deadliest, and most destructive fires in California history. 85 people died that day, 2 people are still listed as missing, and there were dozens of injuries. Nearly 19,000 structures and over 150,000 acres (about 240 sq. miles) were burned. The fire moved so swift and hot that most of the damage occurred within the first 4 hours







Dunster resident Kerry Hall says it took six minutes for the 2018 California Camp Fire to completely decimate her Paradise neighborhood. After activating due to the approaching blaze, Hall's security camera captured the destrction before succumbing to the flames itself.

Above: the security camera upon activation Middle: Approximately five minutes after the camera turns on, it captures the destruction of Hall's yard, with large Ponderosa pines igniting "like matchsticks."

Below: About one minute after the middle photo, Hall's yard is completely engulfed in flames. This is the last photo the camera captured of the yard before falling to the ground. /SUBMITTED



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