

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
INFORMATION UPDATE FOR STAKEHOLDERS**

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Status report on the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (OBSCR)

BACKGROUND:

Since the close of the second Intentions Paper outlining proposed changes to the Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (OBSCR) in October 2010, the team has had several meetings with various groups and has modified some proposals for the regulation and reached a conclusion on others. This note is to provide these results to all stakeholders as the drafting of the wording of the new regulation gets started.

DISCUSSION:

Fire Hazard Abatement and Community Protection via Fuel Management -

Stakeholders expressed concerns that open burning as a tool to abate a fire hazard, given obligations under the *Wildfire Act*, or to treat fuels in the interest of community protection and forest health management will be constrained in the Primary Smoke Sensitivity Zone (PSSZ).

Response

An exemption within OBSCR is proposed that allows fires for fuel abatement and pest or disease control under strictly controlled conditions when the open burning is required by a forest or agricultural official. Use of this exemption would be done under the oversight of a Qualified Professional as well as the consultation of MoE staff.

Setback distances –The intentions paper proposes increases in the setback distances to 500m to occupied residences and 1000m to schools, health care facilities and businesses.

Response

Debris removal operators facing constraints under the new setback distances will have options in the proposed OBSCR to use forced air means of disposal, Best Management Practices or following the advice and guidance of a Qualified Professional (generally a person registered with an appropriate association e.g., ABCFP, APEGBC, or as approved by a MoE Director) to carry out any burning within the default setback distances to minimize impact on neighbours. This will be done with the consultation and approval of MoE staff.

Area Based Smoke Management Planning – SMPs were initially not being considered to cover land in the PSSZ. However, after discussions with the forestry industry and team investigation, it was discovered that some current plans do indeed cover the PSSZs and have worked well.

Response

Area based Smoke Management Plans (SMP) will be allowed to cover parts of the PSSZ. We envision that any planning activity under this option will include a large area, on the scale of a Forest District, and include all stakeholders with an interest in the area as well as persons who would be affected or impacted by any changes in the plan that modify the default conditions in OBSCR. The level of consultation will be site specific but will largely follow the level needed for an application for a permit to discharge air pollutants. MoE staff will be involved but will not usually lead this process. The MoE director will be a required signatory to any plan, i.e., MoE approval is required for any SMP.

Smoke release period and definition – at the time of the Intentions Paper the final length and definition of the smoke release period had not been completed. The team has now considered this issue and developed a definition following the Bulkley Valley Smoke Management Plan.

Response

In the Primary Smoke Sensitivity Zone ignition criteria and smoke release periods are as follows:

Scenario 1:

Smoke Sensitivity Zone	Venting On Day of Ignition	Venting on Day After Ignition	Daily Ignition Period Limits (Y or N)	Smoke Release Period
Primary	Good	Fair (or better)	Yes	4:00 pm the <i>1st</i> day after ignition

Scenario 2:

Smoke Sensitivity Zone	Venting On Day of Ignition	Venting on Day After Ignition	Daily Ignition Period Limits (Y or N)	Smoke Release Period
Primary	Good	n/a	Yes	4:00 pm the <i>day of</i> ignition

Smoke Release Period ends when: < 10 per cent of the burnt area is emitting smoke

Ignition of any piles may commence approx 1-hour after sunrise and must cease within 5 hours of sunset (no new material may be added to existing burning).

In the Secondary Smoke Sensitivity Zone ignition criteria and smoke release periods are as follows:

Smoke Sensitivity Zone	Venting On Day of Ignition	Venting on Day After Ignition	Daily Ignition Period Limits (Y or N)	Smoke Release Period
Secondary	Good	Fair (or better)	Yes	4:00 pm the 2 nd day <i>after</i> ignition

Smoke Release Period ends when: < 10 per cent of the burnt area is emitting smoke

Ignition can commence approximately 1 hour after sunrise and must cease within 3 hours of sunset.

Ignition criteria and smoke release periods for a tertiary zone can be developed in the individual SMPs.

Next Steps:

The Ministry hopes to be able to proceed with the amendments to the regulation later this year.

In addition, the team is looking into several issues around the roll-out and implementation of the regulation, such as producing a package of best management practices regarding clearing, piling, curing and burning. MoE and Wildfire Branch are establishing a core group of fire weather forecasters who will be available during the open burning seasons for custom venting forecasts. MoE is also working with Environment Canada to expand the list of default venting index forecast sites provided routinely through the web and phone systems.