

Thursday, May 18, 2023
5:00 pm

Stoddart Creek Fire Update

Since this fire began on Saturday, May 13, our first and top priority was, and continues to be, the safety and well-being of our community members. Our Elders were top priority to ensure their health and safety, so we evacuated them first, and issued An Evacuation Order May 14, 2023. By May 15, 2023 we submitted full Evacuation Order and Declared State of Emergency for the Nation.

Over the past five days, our staff and all BC Wildfire Service crew and emergency staff have been working incredibly hard to ensure the safety of our people, and the protection of our community.

Today, we have been continuing to collaborate with the BC Wildfire Service crew and have almost completed the 100+ foot wide guard on the southern border of the Blueberry community. This will provide us with the utmost access and a fire break in case the fire reaches our community. Currently, we have 4 dozers, 2 track hoes, a buncher, and a skidder working until we have completed the guard.

The crews continue to advance structural protection support for houses and buildings within the community, with 34 structural firefighters and 5 structure fire trucks currently on site. Pre-mitigation (Triage) is complete and we have a 15-person mitigation crew working to eliminate any potential fuel around homes and structures within our community. This will continue for an estimated 2 more days or until complete.

The Stoddart Creek fire is currently at 22,000 hectares and is still being fought from all angles. The fire complex currently has 121 people on the ground during the day and 48 during the night, with 20 helicopters working intermittently when possible. Smoke has decreased visibility which will slow Heli-portable water attacks to some degree. We ran 1,200 feet of supply line to the sprinkler system that is set in place to protect the area around the graveyard by the old settlement.

We feel very confident in our ability to protect the community with the support we have on site and our already completed work.

On behalf of myself and all of Council, thank you to all our EOC staff, the BC Wildfire Service crew and other emergency staff who are working so hard to protect our community. We appreciate each and every person.

And, thank you also to the wider community, local leaders and surrounding residents for your understanding and cooperation in working with the B.C. Wildfire Service crews and emergency personnel.

We will continue to keep our members and the public updated on the situation. Stay safe.

Chief Judy Desjarlais
Blueberry River First Nations

For Members: please see the [Emergency Updates](#) page in the members-only section of the website or the mobile App for further information, including the **2023 Emergency Preparedness Directory**.

Background

Timeline of Events:

- **Sunday, May 14:**
 - An [Evacuation Order](#) was made for the entire community of Blueberry River First Nations.
- **Monday, May 15:**
 - [Declaration of State of Local Emergency ORDER](#)
- **Tuesday, May 16:** an **update** was provided to community members indicating:
 - The fire had moved toward the community within the previous 24 hours,
 - A fire guard was being cut near the community's south end,
 - Structural protection support for houses and buildings was on site, and
 - A good water supply was in place from the BC Wildfire Service as well as First Nations' Emergency Services Society of British Columbia (FNESS).
- **Wednesday, May 17:**



- An **updated Evacuation Order** was sent to Blueberry River local community members asking community members to leave their homes and proceed to the evacuation point (9929 Swanson Street, Fort St John, BC/ KIHEW/Mastec Office on Airport Road).
- An **update** was provided to the community members indicating:
 - Blueberry is very well covered to protect the community if the fire reaches the outskirts,
 - 34 structural firefighters are on site and 5 structure fire trucks are on site, which stay for a 12-hour day in case the situation escalates,
 - Pre-mitigation (Triage) is currently is 80% complete and is expected to be 100% complete by end of day, and
 - Crews are setting up water protection around the graveyard.

For more up to date information on the wildfire situation, please see:

- BC Wildfire Service [Stoddart Creek Information page](#)
- [The Peace River Regional District website](#) for emergency information

Key Contacts

Blueberry River First Nations Emergency Response Contact

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Transportation Assistance (for members) Contact

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