

100 MILE HOUSE FREE PRESS

Cariboo Fire restrictions in place a month early

By Joan Silver - 100 Mile House Free Press

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The Cariboo has another first, but this time it's a rather dubious distinction.

The region is the first in the province to prohibit open fires larger than one metre high and one metre wide.

Provincial fire information officer Kim Steinbart says the ban comes about one month earlier than last year because of the weather.

The dry conditions after a warm winter increase the risk of forest fires, she explains.

The local fire centre is open year round, but it's gearing up now. Some crews have returned instead of waiting to the beginning of May as usual.

Everyone is hoping for spring rain in May and June, Steinbart says, adding an air tanker will be based in Kamloops and will be available to travel throughout the province.

The ban applies to all private land, BC Parks and Crown land.

100 Mile House Fire-Rescue chief Darrell Blades says the ban will also apply to the municipality. The only fires allowed in 100 Mile will be campfires, but a permit from the fire department is required.

The provincial restrictions ban waste or slash burning and stubble or grass burning over any area.

It doesn't apply to cooking stoves that use gas, propane or briquettes or open fires, including campfires smaller than one metre by one metre.

The public is urged to be cautious with any open burning.

The bans are in effect from April 2 to Sept. 30 or until the ban is lifted.

To report a wildfire or unattended campfire call, 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on a cell phone.