



Pilot's Guide To Spotting and Reporting Forest Fires

Introduction

Every year in British Columbia there is an average of 1800 forest fires reported. Of these fires 38.5% are caused by humans and 61.5% are caused by lightning. The forestry service relies heavily on reports from the general public to identify new fires in their early stages.

This document will serve as a guide for pilots on how to help the forestry service identify and combat wildfires in British Columbia.

****NOTE** - There are paid professionals whose job it is to search for and identify forest fires. The use of any information in this guide shall be limited to situations in which you come across a forest fire while already on a recreational flight.**

Restricted Airspace

Section 601.15 of Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs) provides that no unauthorized person shall operate an aircraft over a forest fire area, or over any area that is located within 5 NM of one, at an altitude of less than 3000 ft. AGL. A NOTAM does not need to be issued for this airspace restriction to be in effect. In accordance with CAR 601.16, however, Transport Canada may issue a NOTAM to restrict the airspace further around a forest fire. Pilots are reminded to check NOTAMs before flying near forest fires.

Safety Precautions

- Do not accept any additional risk or put yourself in a dangerous position in an attempt to gather information or observe a wild fire.
- If you inadvertently fly into an active forest fire fighting area all aerial fire suppression operations are immediately suspended putting lives at risk and delaying firefighting efforts. **READ YOUR NOTAMS**
- As an atmospheric condition smoke (FU) can be very insidious. Smoke often degrades visibility to below VFR even when weather reporting stations are reporting better than the minimum VFR weather limits
- If you fly in the backcountry observe and respect all campfire restrictions.

Reporting a Forest Fire

Inform One Of The Following:

1. BC Wildfire Service 800-663-5555 (Cell: *5555)
2. Nearest ATC Tower or Enroute Frequency
3. NAV Canada Flight Information Centre RCO
(See Attached Frequency Map)

Record The Following Information:

1. Location of the fire
2. What is burning
3. How large is the fire
4. Colour of smoke
5. Are there any nearby roads or structures
6. Are there lives or property at risk
7. Is the fire a controlled slash burn or wild

****** Please attempt to gather this information while remaining at least 5nm from the fire even if a NOTAM has not been issued. Aerial firefighting operations might already be underway. ******

If you are in contact with ATC and on radar the controller will be able to mark the latitude and longitude for you and inform the appropriate agencies.

Remember

1. Always fly the aircraft first
2. Remain at least 5nm from all fires or as NOTAMd
3. Check your NOTAMS
4. Smoke can quickly reduce visibility to below VFR
5. **Do Not Try To Be A Hero**



Pilot's Guide To Spotting and Reporting Forest Fires

