Historical wildfire data dictionary

2006 to 2021



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| Historical Wildfire Data Dictionary Forestry and Parks | |
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Introduction

The information in this dictionary relates to the historical wildfire database for Alberta generated between 2006 and 2021.

Wildfires have a point of origin inside the Forest Protection Area (FPA) – either provincial lands or federal lands covered by agreement with the province.

Fires having a point of origin outside the FPA are referred to as Mutual Aid (MA) fires are not covered by this dictionary.

Data Dictionary

1. field name: fire_year

The wildfire year runs from 00:00 hours on April 1 until 23:59 hours on March 31. The fire year is named for the year in which April 1 falls. For example, the 2013 fire year begins April 1, 2013 and ends March 31, 2014.

2. field name: fire_number

Ex: CWF001

The first letter of the wildfire number indicates the forest area in which the ignition area is located.

C-Calgary

E-Edson

H-High Level

G-Grande Prairie

L-Lac La Biche

M-Fort McMurray

P-Peace River

R-Rocky

S-Slave Lake

W-Whitecourt

WF indicates that this is a wildfire.

Three digits (with leading zeros) number wildfires consecutively within each forest area starting April 1 and terminating March 31 of each year.

Wildfire numbers are assigned based on the ignition area and do not change if the wildfire crosses the Forest Protection Area or provincial boundaries. For example, a wildfire starting in the Forest Protection Area burns into the non-protection area – numbered as an Area wildfire. A wildfire that starts in the border zone agreement area and burns back into the province is assigned a border zone number.

Wildfire numbers that are assigned in error or turn out not to be a valid wildfire are to be reused so may show out of date sequence.

3. field name: fire name

Wildfires of provincial significance are assigned a geographic name for ease of recognition. For example: Mosquito Lake Fire.

If the wildfire is part of a wildfire complex, the complex name would be recorded here. For example: Burnt Hill Complex

If both names have been assigned to a wildfire they are recorded as fire name then complex name. For example: Mosquito Lake Fire Burnt Hill Complex.

4. field name: current size

This is the final area burned of the wildfire. This size will not necessarily match the sizes from the fire status fields. If an updated size is determined after a wildfire has already been extinguished, the revised size is recorded in the Area Burned field of FIRES and the extinguished size recorded on the fire status line will not change.

Wildfires that have had aerial photography flown will generally not have the area burned updated until the following spring when the interpolation is complete. This interpolation includes removal of waterbodies, unburnt islands and man-made infrastructure.

5. field name: size class:

This is a grouping of wildfires into classes based on final area burned. Size class can change as the wildfire grows until the final area burned is determined after extinguishment.

The breakdown is as follows:

A class = 0 to 0.1 ha

B class > 0.1 ha to 4.0 ha

C class > 4.0 ha to 40.0 ha

D class > 40.0 ha to 200 ha

E class > 200 ha

6. field name: fire_location_latitude7. field name: fire_location_longitude

Location of the ignition area of the wildfire recorded as a GPS (recorded as decimal degrees (DD).

The location is originally captured during the assessment but may be further investigated as the wildfire progresses. The final location is the confirmed ignition area of the wildfire.

8. field name: fire_origin

This indicates who owns or administers the land the wildfire is burning on. If the wildfire covers more than one origin, this will be the land where the ignition area of the wildfire is.

| Provincial | Private | Indian Reserve |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Provincial Park | Daprtment of National Defence | Metis Settlement |

9. field name: general cause description

Classification of the wildfire cause according to the general group, individual industry or ignition source (for lightning) that started the wildfire.

For wildfires that are currently being investigated, the temporary general cause of UNDER INVESTIGATION is used.

A wildfire resulting from an agricultural or farming activity performed by

either people or machines (livestock or crop).

This general cause was introduced in 2012. For 2011 and earlier wildfires, Agriculture Industry was captured under the Resident cause.

FOREST INDUSTRY: A wildfire caused by people or machines used in any activity associated

with forest fiber production. This category includes pulp mills, sawmills and plywood/panel/post operations related to resource industry

inspection, surveying, protection, scaling, silviculture, etc.

GOVERNMENT: A wildfire started by employees, agents or contractors of the

government. Mountain pine beetle control burns that become wildfires would fall in this category with the provincial government as the industry identifier. This general cause also requires an industry identification.

This general cause was introduced in 2012. For 2011 and earlier wildfires, Government was captured under the Other Industry cause.

INCENDIARY: A wildfire that has been intentionally ignited in an area or under

circumstances where and when there should not be a fire.

<u>LIGHTNING</u>: A wildfire ignited by lightning.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY: A wildfire caused by any machine, employee, agent or contractor

performing work associated with exploration, construction, production or transmission by an oil and gas company, including oil sands companies.

A wildfire caused by an industry other than power line, oil and gas, forest, agriculture, or railway. This general cause also requires an

industry identification.

POWER LINE INDUSTRY: A wildfire caused by any machine, employee, agent or contractor

performing work associated with a power line company, any animals or trees interacting with a power line, or any power line hardware or

mechanics.

RAILROAD: A wildfire caused by any machine, employee, agent or contractor

performing work associated with a railway operation.

RECREATION: A wildfire caused by any person or equipment engaged in a recreation

activity (e.g., camper, hunter, fisherman, biker, picnicker, berry picker,

etc.). This general cause also requires a responsible group.

RESIDENT: A wildfire resulting from an activity performed by either people or

machines on residential land or any wildfire caused by an activity associated with normal living in a forested area (e.g., residence/building

OTHER INDUSTRY:

fires, debris burning, smoking, vehicle accidents that cause wildfires, etc.).

<u>UNDETERMINED:</u>

A wildfire that has been investigated but the cause cannot be

determined.

Upon further evidence or new information, the final cause may be

determined and this cause may be updated.

The wildfire year runs from April 1 – March 31. The fire year is named for the year in which the first of April falls. For example, the 2023 fire year begins April 1, 2023 and ends March 31, 2024.

The assessment date and time determines the fire year in which the wildfire occurred.

10. field name: industry_identifier_desc

Two of the above mentioned general cause categories require further detail through the industry identifier.

Government - identify the branch of government responsible for the wildfire. Options are:

| Municipal government | Provincial government | Federal government | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--|
| | | | |

Other Industry – identify the industry (other than those with their own general cause) who is responsible for the wildfire. Options are:

| Commercial fishery | Mining | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Commercial outfitting | trapping | |
| Commercial tourism | Utility (water and gas service) | |
| Commercial transportation | Waste disposal (municipal and indisutry) | |

11. field name: responsible_group_desc

For the general cause of Recreation, identify the recreational group responsible for causing the wildfire.

- campers (includes day use)
- hunters
- other

12. field name: activity_class

Identifies the specific activity that was going on when the wildfire was started.

Arson A wildfire set intentionally or recklessly to cause damage by fire or

explosion to property.

This activity class does not require a true cause.

Cooking and Warming A fire lit for the purpose of cooking or warming. This means by use of

campfire, wood stove, smokehouse, sweat lodge or sauna.

Debris Disposal A wildfire resulting from the disposal of any debris including:

 all brush or other forest cover burned while still "standing", including standing brush burned for the purpose of land clearing,

- piles of brush or timber (whether hand or machine piled),
- slash,
- windrows, and
- grass or stubble (can be standing, mowed or piled).

Flaring Gas A wildfire caused by the flaring of petroleum and natural gas, or their

associated by-products.

OHV Operation A wildfire caused by an off-highway vehicle (OHV) or by its operator (dirt

bikes, quads or track units). For example, embers falling from the

exhaust, no spark arrestor, etc.

Operations A wildfire caused by any construction, maintenance or day-to-day

operations conducted by industry or a government agency.

Prescribed Fire A wildfire caused when a prescribed fire or hazard reduction burn

escapes its containment unit boundary and suppression is required, or is thought to be extinguished but flares up (regardless of whether it

burns outside the containment unit boundary or not).

This activity class does not require a true cause.

Refuse Disposal A wildfire caused by the disposal of waste/garbage resulting from

domestic, industrial, agricultural, or municipal sources, sawmill burners,

etc.

Fires solely within a municipal refuse site, in which Wildfire

Management is required to assist with suppression, are mutual-aid fires

not wildfires.

Restart A restart of a wildfire thought to be previously extinguished.

This activity class does not require a true cause.

Structure Fire A wildfire caused by the spread of a fire to the surrounding forest fuels

from a structural facility (e.g., outbuilding, house, oilfield building,

temporary residence [not recreational]).

This activity class does not require a true cause.

Transportation A wildfire resulting from the operation of an aircraft or vehicle excluding

OHVs (e.g., trucks, cars, buses, camping trailers, motorhomes, rotor

wing, fixed-wing).

Unclassified A wildfire caused by any activity class not classified or listed. Specify in

remarks the details of how the wildfire started (e.g., spontaneous

combustion, discarded cigarette.

For wildfires with a general cause of incendiary, unclassified refers to a

wildfire that is purposely lit but not thought to be arson.

Beginning in 2018, for wildfires with a general cause of recreation or resident, unclassified is used for wildfires caused by exploding targets

and fireworks (with the true cause of incendiary device).

13. field name: true cause

Identifies the specific reason why the wildfire started.

Animals A wildfire caused by an animal making contact with a power line.

Burning Substance A wildfire caused when a burning substance is placed on flammable

forest fuels. For example:

- hot exhaust or carbon from an OHV, train or heavy equipment,
- · sparks from a chimney,

· children playing with matches or lighters, and

cigarette butt.

Friction Spark

A wildfire caused by friction sparks from a vehicle, heavy equipment,

farm equipment or train (e.g., grater on gravel road, train, etc.).

Incendiary Device A wildfire caused by an incendiary device or ammunition (e.g., flares,

fireworks, exploding targets, fusees, etc.).

Line Impact A wildfire caused by any object contacting a power line (e.g., tree, tarp,

truck, beaver cuts tree down and tree strikes power line).

Mechanical Failure A wildfire caused by the failure or malfunction of an engine or

mechanical component (e.g., a blown fuse on a power line, a

bearing/hotbox on a train).

Unclassified A wildfire caused by any true cause not classified or listed. Specify the

cause in the remarks (e.g., spontaneous combustion, smudge,

discarded cigarette).

Unsafe Fire A wildfire caused by any action or conditions that deemed the burning

as unsafe. For example:

an abandoned or unattended fire,

• burning without a permit or not following permit conditions,

high hazard,

• insufficient buffer/fireguard between fire and forest fuels,

high winds, spotting, extremely dry conditions,

insufficient resources on site, and

a fire that was started during the fire season and was not

extinguished.

Vehicle Fire A wildfire caused by the spread of fire to the surrounding forest fuels

from a vehicle fire.

Winter Burning A wildfire that was lit outside the fire season and was not extinguished.

14. field name: fire_start_date

The time and date the wildfire started.

If the exact time and date is unknown, an estimate is made of the wildfire start time.

Actual start time can be obtained by storm tracking, a witness or statement from the responsible party. Start time for lightning-caused wildfires can be estimated from lightning map data.

15. field name: det_agent

A more specific description of the detection agent that discovered the wildfire.

Lookout (LKT) - two digit code identifying the lookout tower. Click here for provincial lookout list.

Air Patrol (AIR)

RAP - rappel crew

HAC - helitack crew

ASU - unit crew

MD - man up rotor wing

FW - fixed wing patrol

RW - rotor wing patrol

Ground Patrol (GRP)

FRST - forest officer

CREW - wildfire crew

PATR – patrolman

PIND - industry patrol

Unplanned (UNP)

310 - called in on 310 FIRE phone line

GOVT – other government agencies

LFS - other department personnel

PUB - general public

UAA - unplanned department aircraft

UIND - unplanned industry aircraft

UPA - unplanned public aircraft

16. field name: discovered_date

The time the detection agent first discovered the wildfire.

This field is mandatory for all detection agents except unplanned, therefore, this field may be blank on those wildfires.

17. field name: det_agent_type

The general type of detection agent responsible for discovering the wildfire.

LKT - lookout

AIR - air patrol

GRP - ground patrol

UNP - unplanned

18. field name: discovered size

The size of wildfire when first discovered by the detection agent.

19. field name: reported_date

The time and date the wildfire was first reported to Wildfire Management. This is generally the time the discovery agent calls the Area dispatch.

The report time can be the same as the discovery time.

20. field name: dispatched_resources

The first Wildfire Management resource that started for the wildfire.

21. field name: dispatched date

The date and time the first Wildfire Management resource was dispatched to the wildfire.

22. field name: start_for_fire_date

The time and date that the first Wildfire Management resource started for the wildfire.

For a rotor wing this would be skids up. For an airtanker group, this would be wheels roll on the birddog aircraft. For a vehicle, it would be the time the vehicle departed the base/compound/home for the wildfire (after the briefing, picking up personnel or loading of equipment if any of these are done after resource was dispatched).

If the discovery agent took initial action on the wildfire, the started for fire time may be the same as the dispatch time.

23. field name: assesment resource

This is the name (first and last) of the Wildfire Management person who first assessed the wildfire. This assessment could be a quick assessment or the full assessment on the FP41.

The position recorded is the is the position the "assessed by" resource was filling at the time of assessment.

Choose one of the following options to describe the position the "assessed by" resource was filling at the time of the assessment.

Air Attack Officer Indicates that an airtanker group was the first Wildfire Management resource at the

wildfire and the Air Attack Officer provided the assessment.

Initial Action forces Indicates that a resource was dispatched to do initial action on the wildfire, was the first

Wildfire Management resource at the wildfire and that the Crew Leader, Sector Leader,

Forest Officer etc. provided the assessment.

This would still be the choice if a HAC crew assessed the wildfire then moved on to a

wildfire of higher priority rather than fighting the original wildfire.

Wildfire Assessor This indicates a Wildfire Assessor, may or may not be Incident Commander 2 certified,

who is on for assessments and was the first Wildfire Management resource at the wildfire

and provided the assessment

Other The "other" category is only to be used to describe situations where the Wildfire

Management resource that assessed the fire was not acting in any of the listed positions.

For example:

a Forest Area Manager who is not an Incident Commander 2 assesses the wildfire

a patrolman or guardian assesses a wildfire but does not action the wildfire

an aerial observer doing assessments by fixed-wing aircraft,

a Helicopter Coordinator

If the only assessment of a wildfire comes from a pilot working with our personnel, but is temporarily separated from them, the Duty Officer must take responsibility for that assessment so "other" would be entered here. This situation must be detailed in the remarks. Assessments provided by pilots should be the exception and not the rule.

24. field name: assessment datetime

The date and time the wildfire was originally assessed by Wildfire Management employees.

This date determines the fire year in which the wildfire occurs.

25. field name: assessment hectares

The size of the wildfire at the time of assessment is recorded to the nearest hectare or hundredth (0.01) of a hectare.

26. field name: fire_spread_rate

The rate of spread of the wildfire at the time of initial assessment, capture in metres per minute.

27. field name: fire type

This is the predominant fire behaviour that was observed when the fire was originally assessed.

Ground Fire A fire that burns in the ground fuel layer.

Surface Fire A fire that burns in the surface fuels and involves less than 10% of the trees torching.

Campfires, brush piles and windrows that have not burned into the duff layer would be considered

surface fires.

Crown Fire A fire that advances through the crown fuel layer and involves more than 10% of the tree crowns.

28. field name: fire position on slope

The position of the wildfire relative to the slope it is travelling on at the time of initial assessment.

Bottom Flat Lower 1/3 Middle 1/3 Upper 1/3

29. field name: weather_conditions_over_fire

Description of the weather conditions over the wildfire at the time of initial assessment.

CB dry CB wet Clear Cloudy Rain showers

30. field name: temperature

The temperature at the wildfire site at the time of initial assessment, captured in degrees Celsius.

31. field name: relative_humidity

The relative humidity at the wildfire site at the time of initial assessment.

32. field name: wind_direction

The wind direction at the wildfire site at the time of initial assessment.

33. field name: wind_speed

The wind speed at the wildfire site at the time of initial assessment, captured in kilometers per hour.

34. field name: fuel_type

The predominate fuel type (vegetation cover) in which the wildfire is burning, at the time of initial assessment.

| Coniferous | Slash | |
|--|---|--|
| C-1 Spruce-Lichen Woodland C-2 Boreal Spruce C-3 Mature Jack or Lodgepole Pine C-4 Immature Jack or Lodgepole Pine | S-1 Jack or Lodgepole Pine slash S-2 White Spruce-Balsam slash | |
| Mixedwood | Deciduous | |
| M-1 Boreal Mixedwood-Leafless M-2 Boreal Mixedwood-Green | D-1 Leafless Aspen | |
| Other fuel type | Grass O-1a Matted Grass O-1b Standing Grass | |

35. field name: initial action by

The resource that took the first physical suppressive action directly on the wildfire.

Airtanker this indicates that an airtanker group based in Alberta dropped on the wildfire.

Fire Department this would include fire departments from the city, town, county, municipal district,

Indian reserve or Metis settlement.

FPD Staff this could be a Ranger, Fire Guardian, Patrolman, Strike Team Leader, etc.

FTAC Firetack crew

HAC Helitack crew

Industry includes forest, oil and gas and utility industries.

Land Owner private landowner upon whose land the wildfire started.

Other Agency this would include a county, municipal district, other division or department of the

provincial government, other federal government agency and Metis settlement.

If a wildfire is actioned by, for example, a Saskatchewan based airtanker or a British Columbia based Helitack crew, this would be "other agency". However, if a resource from another division or department of our provincial government, another provincial government or the federal government is assigned to Wildfire Management on manup or a wildfire, they would be considered FPD staff, airtanker, helitack, etc. and not "other agency".

Public members of the general public.

RAP Rappel Crew

UNIT Unit Crew

36. field name: ia arrival at fire date

This is the date and time that the initial action resource (first physical suppression) arrived at the wildfire.

If the intitial action resource is also the resource that assessed the wildfire, this will be the same date and time as "arrival date and time" on the FP41. If the wildfire was assessed by a different resource then this would be a later date and time

37. field name: ia access

This is only completed and captured in FIRES for wildland firefighting crews (HAC, UNIT, FTAC). All resources can record this information on the FP41.

Record the method of access that the initial action resource used.

Ground indicates the initial attack resource accessed the site by ground e.g., vehicle, ATV, walk,

etc.

If ground, include information on the type of road, conditions, directions, etc. (this field is

preferred but not mandatory)

Conventional RW indicates the initial attack resource flew to the site in a helicopter, landed the helicopter

and accessed the wildfire.

Hover Exit indicates the initial attack resource accessed the wildfire via a helicopter but by hover exit

rather than landing

38. field name: fire fighting start date

The time and date that the initial action resource began physical suppression on the wildfire.

39. field name: fire_fighting_start_size

The size of the wildfire at the time the initial action resource began physical suppression, recorded to the nearest hectare or hundredth (0.01) of a hectare.

40. field name: bucketing_on_fire

If a helicopter with a bucket was used during the initial action of the wildfire, choose 'yes'.

41. field name: distance_from_water_source

If a helicopter with a bucket was used during initial action of the wildfire, record the distance in kilometers (to the nearest tenth) that the rotor wing flew from the water source to the wildfire.

42. field name: first_bucket_drop_date

If a helicopter with a bucket was used during initial action of the wildfire, record the date and time of the first bucket drop on the wildfire.

43. field name: bh fs date

The date and time the Incident Commander (IC) determined the wildfire to be at the fire status of being held (BH).

A wildfire that is being held is where the resources are currently committed and sufficient action has been taken, such that the wildfire is not likely to spread beyond existing or predetermined boundaries under prevailing and forecasted weather and fire behaviour conditions.

A wildfire is not required to have a being held status. If at the initial assessment of the wildfire, the IC determines the wildfire to be under control, the date and time for being held will be the same as the date and time for under control.

44. field name: bh_hectares

The size of the wildfire at the time the Incident Commander changed the status to Being Held (BH), recorded to the nearest hectare or hundredth (0.01) of a hectare.

If the wildfire is assessed as under control (UC) without the BH stage, the BH size will be the same as the UC size.

45. field name: uc fs date

The date and time the Incident Commander determined the wildfire to be at the fire status of under control (UC).

A wildfire that is under control has sufficient suppression action and the entire fire perimeter is secured from further spread. The fireline perimeter has mechanical, handline, or natural barriers with a high confidence level of no further hectare loss through predicted weather and present resources.

46. field name: uc_hectares

The size of the wildfire at the time the Incident Commander changed the status to Under Control (UC), recorded to the nearest hectare or hundredth (0.01) of a hectare.

47. field name: to_fs_date

This is the date and time the Incident Commander determined the wildfire to be at the fire status of turned over (TO).

A turned over wildfire status is when Wildfire Management turns over the responsibility for extinguishment of a wildfire to another agency or individual. Before a wildfire can be "turned over, Wildfire Management must ensure that the agency or individual is willing and has the capability and resources to completely extinguish the wildfire.

48. field name: to_hectares

The size of the wildfire at the time the Incident Commander turned over the extinguishment of the wildfire to another agency or individual, recorded to the nearest hectare or hundredth (0.01) of a hectare.

49. field name: ex fs date

This is the date and time the Incident Commander determined the wildfire to be completely extinguished (EX).

50. field name: ex_hectares

The size of the wildfire at the time the Incident Commander changed the status to Extinguished (EX), recorded to the nearest hectare or hundredth (0.01) of a hectare.

Lookout Identifiers

| AC | Adams Creek | FL | Falls | PA | Panny |
|----|-----------------|----|-------------------|----|------------------|
| AD | Adair | FO | Fontas | PD | Petitot |
| AL | Algar | FT | Flat Top | PL | Porcupine |
| AM | Amber | GE | Grande | PO | Ponton |
| AN | Ansell | GF | Grave Flats | PS | Pass Creek |
| AT | Athabasca | GL | Gordon Lake | PT | Pinto |
| AU | Aurora | GM | Goose Mountain | PU | Puskwaskau |
| ВС | Basset | GT | Gift Lake | RA | Ram |
| BD | Bald Mountain | HA | Hammel | RE | Red Earth |
| BE | Berland | НВ | Hailstone Butte | RH | Round Hill |
| BF | Buffalo | HH | Hawk Hills | RK | Rock Island Lake |
| BH | Blue Hill | HK | Hotchkiss | RR | Raspberry Ridge |
| ВІ | Birch Mountain | HL | Heart Lake | RT | Rainbow |
| BL | Baseline | НМ | House Mountain | RY | Rocky |
| BN | Buckton | HU | Huckleberry | SA | Saddle Hills |
| BP | Barrier Lake | IM | Imperial | SD | Swan Dive |
| BR | Battle River | IS | Ironstone | SG | Sugarloaf |
| BS | Bison Lake | JE | Jean Lake | SI | Simonette |
| ВТ | Blackstone | JM | Junction Mountain | SK | Smoky |
| BY | Baldy | JO | Johnson Lake | SN | Snuff Mountain |
| BZ | Brazeau | KA | Kakwa | SP | Salt Prairie |
| CA | Chinchaga | KE | Keg | SQ | Sandy Lake |
| СВ | Carbondale | KK | Kananaskis | SR | Sand River |
| CC | Carrot Creek | KM | Kimiwan | ST | Stony Mountain |
| CE | Cline | KB | Kirby Lake | SV | Steen |
| CF | Cambrian | LG | Legend | SW | Sweathouse |
| СН | Clear Hills | LI | Limestone | TM | Trout Mountain |
| CK | Conklin | LK | Livock | TO | Tom Hill |
| CM | Chisholm | LO | Lovett | TP | Teepee Lake |
| CP | Cowpar Lake | LV | Livingstone | TR | Torrens |
| СТ | Copton | MB | Mayberne | TT | Talbot Lake |
| CU | Cadotte | MH | Mockingbird Hill | TY | Tony |
| CY | Chipewyan Lakes | MN | Meridian | VG | Vega |
| DG | Doig | MO | Moberly | WC | Whitecourt |
| DM | Deer Mountain | MQ | Muskwa | WD | Whitemud |
| DW | Deadwood | MR | Marten Mountain | WF | Whitefish |
| EA | Eagle | MS | Moose Mountain | WM | White Mountain |
| EC | Economy Creek | MU | Muskeg Mountain | WT | Watt Mountain |
| ED | Edra | MY | May | WU | Wadlin |
| EH | Enilda | NM | Nose Mountain | YA | Yates |
| EL | Ells River | NO | Notikewin | ΥH | Yellowhead |
| FG | Foggy Mountain | ОВ | Obed | ZA | Zama |
| | | OL | Otter Lakes | | |