



Fire Bans - Backgrounder

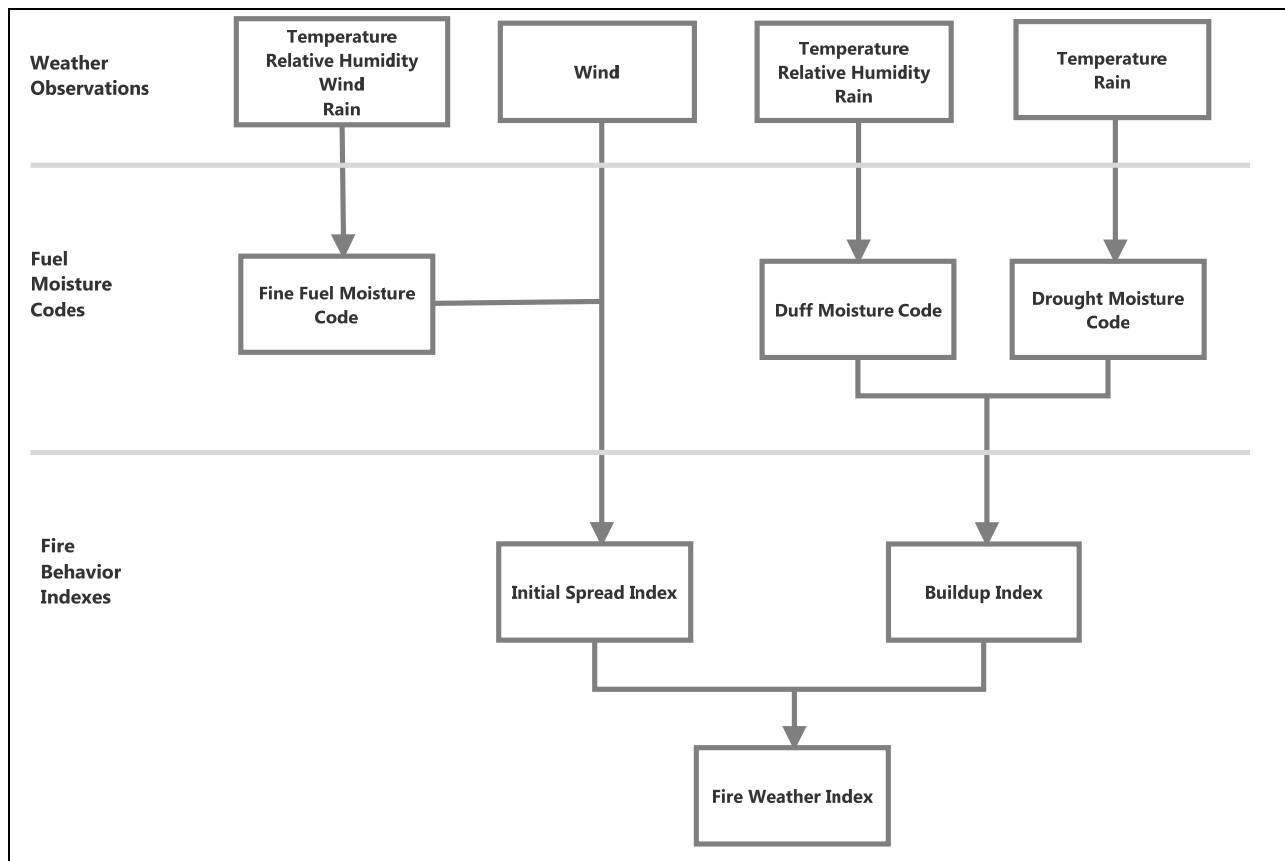
October to March is when the wildfire hazard is the highest in Southern Alberta. Persistent warm and dry conditions, wind and seasonal curing of grasses and other vegetation combined put the area at a high risk for wildfires. Lethbridge County continually monitors the conditions and places fire bans when necessary.

Besides the basic indicators, a scientific approach is used to determine when/if a fire ban is necessary.

The science includes calculations that consider the daily recorded temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and rain. Those records are then calculated into Fuel Moisture Codes to determine the current Initial Spread and Buildup Indexes. We then take the resulting Initial Spread Index and the Buildup Index to get Fire Behavior Indexes. By charting those Indexes with a fuel type such as dry standing and noting the wind speed or potential for wind, we then have a calculated fire hazard. See figure 1 below.

For example, on October 20, 2014 the Initial Spread Index for this region was calculated to be 16. Sixteen charted with 100% cured standing grass gives us a potential fire behavior of 54 m/min. That means a fire in standing grass will travel at 54 metres per minute WITH NO WIND.

Figure 1



For more information contact the Lethbridge County Emergency Services Department at 403-328-5525.