



News Release – For Immediate Release April 2, 2009

County Fire Protection Marks April as Official Start to Fire Season

Even though there is still snow on the ground, the Fire Protection Office for the County of Grande Prairie has marked April 1, 2009 as the official start to the wildfire season.

Persons wanting to burn in rural areas are required to get a permit from the County's Fire Protection Office at (780) 513-3953.

The announcement coincides with a similar announcement made earlier this week by Alberta Sustainable Resources Development (SRD). SRD Information Officer Kelly Burke for the Smoky Management Area said there is still a risk of wildfire despite the presence of melting snow and wet surfaces.

“As the snow melts, the sun will dry out a lot of grass and wood that was under the snowpack, creating the opportunity for a wildfire, particularly holdover fires that may have been started in the fall or winter and were improperly extinguished,” she said. “They can smoulder underground for months and can travel back up to the surface as the snowpack melts.”

Burke recommended people revisit any sites where they conducted winter burns to ensure there is no holdover fire. She added drying conditions and strong winds can fuel fast-burning grassfires which is why people must get a fire permit before doing any type of burning – except for lighting a campfire – within a Forest Protection Area. Provincial fire permits are free and available at the local SRD office in Grande Prairie. To find the location, call 310-0000 or visit www.srd.alberta.ca/informationcentre/offices.aspx.

To report a wildfire, call 310-FIRE. For information about fire bans and forest closures in Alberta, visit www.albertafirebans.ca.

For more information contact:

Kelly Burke
Information Officer
Sustainable Resources Development
Ph. (780) 538-5327
Cell. (780) 832 7235

