

# Bighorn Backcountry

*Alberta's Bighorn Backcountry offers spectacular Rocky Mountain scenery and unforgettable recreational opportunities.*

*Keep this area beautiful:*

- stay on the trail,*
- respect other users, and*
- leave no trace of your visit.*

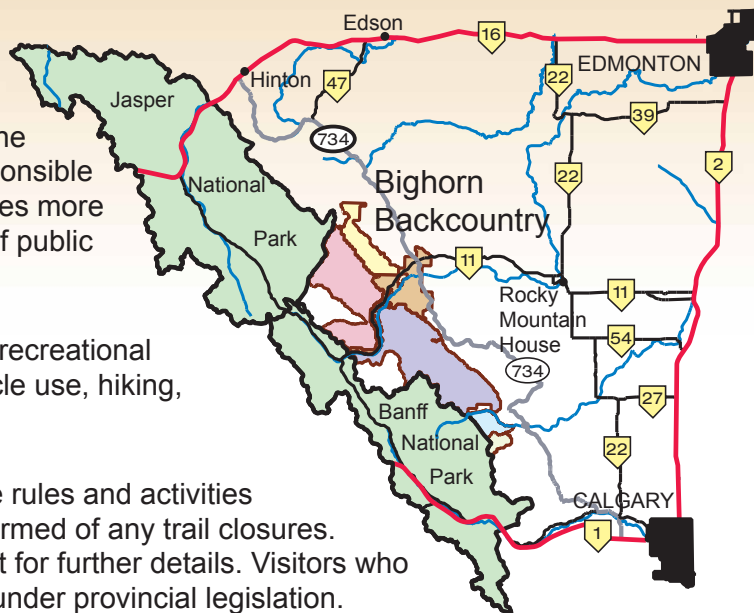
The Bighorn Backcountry is managed to ensure the protection of the environment, while allowing responsible and sustainable recreational use. The area includes more than 5,000 square kilometres (1.2 million acres) of public lands east of Banff and Jasper National Parks.

The Bighorn Backcountry hosts a large variety of recreational activities including camping, OHV and snow vehicle use, hiking, fishing, hunting and cycling.

It is your responsibility to become familiar with the rules and activities allowed in this area before you visit and to be informed of any trail closures. Please refer to the map and chart in this pamphlet for further details. Visitors who do not follow the rules could be fined or charged under provincial legislation.

If you have any concerns about the condition of the trails and campsites or their appropriate use, please call Alberta Environment and Parks at the Rocky Mountain House Office, 403-845-8250. (Dial 310-0000 for toll-free service.)

For current trail conditions and information kiosk locations, please visit the Bighorn Backcountry website at [www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca)



## Definitions for the Bighorn Backcountry

- Motorized User** ☞ recreational user of both off-highway vehicles and snow vehicles.
- Equestrian User or Equine** ☞ recreational user of both horses and/or mules, used for trail riding, pack horse, buggy/cart, covered wagon or horse-drawn sleigh.
- Non-Motorized User** ☞ recreational user which is non-motorized except equestrian user or equine where specified or restricted.
- Snow Vehicle** ☞ motor vehicle designed and equipped to be driven exclusively on snow or ice.
- Off-Highway Vehicles or OHV** ☞ motor vehicle used for cross-country travel on land, water, snow, ice, marsh, swamp or other natural terrain and which has:
- a curb weight of 590 kg (1,300 lb) or less,
  - tire pressure of 110 Kpa (16 psi) or less,
  - a wheelbase of 1.85 metres (73") or less,
  - a width of 1.78 metres (70") or less.

**NOTE:** Trail access may be amended, modified or closed by an Officer in response to fires, fire hazard, flooding, wildlife or other environmental and safety concerns. Ensure you have the most recent information on the area you are travelling to before you arrive and obey all posted signs and notices. Most wildlife have their young in May and June. If possible, avoid travel in the Bighorn Backcountry during this time.

## Your Responsibilities as a User

As a user of the areas within the public land use zones, it is your responsibility to ensure you are adequately informed of trail closures, appropriate usage and rules.

As per the Public Lands Administration Regulations, anyone operating an OHV within the Bighorn Backcountry Public Land Use Zones must obtain a **current copy** of trail information and comply with any instructions given therein. To avoid misuse, have the most recent copy of The Public Land Use Zones of the Bighorn Backcountry brochure with you at all times while you are enjoying the area.

The brochure as well as current trail and area updates are located on the website [www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca) Hardcopy of the brochures are also available at many vendors and AEP offices.

Motorized vehicle restrictions do not apply to vehicles used for government resource management activities and emergency purposes. Permits may be issued to trappers for motorized vehicle use within the limits of registered trapping areas. The use of motorized vehicles to conduct industrial activity is permitted in some zones under a Public Lands disposition approved by Alberta Environment and Parks.

## Adjacent Areas

**Banff and Jasper National Parks:** motorized off-highway vehicles, firearms and hunting are not permitted. There are some restrictions for non-motorized activities. National Park Fishing Licences are required in the National Parks. Contact Parks Canada staff for further information.

**Siffleur and White Goat Wilderness Areas:** foot-travel only; bicycles, equine, motorized vehicles, hunting, fishing and campfires are not permitted.

**Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve:** limited use/access, bicycles and equestrian users only on designated trails. Motorized access, hunting, fishing, grazing, camping and campfires are not permitted.

## Volunteer Efforts in the Public

### Land Use Zones

Volunteers play an important role in maintaining and enhancing the designated trail system in the Bighorn Backcountry. Their work helps improve water quality and protect fisheries resources and riparian zones.

They routinely perform maintenance on existing bridges, trails and campsites. The efforts and funding of these dedicated individuals and groups provide recreational opportunities for all users of the area, while protecting the area's natural resources for current and future generations. Respect the work and the facilities our volunteers have contributed. Stay on designated trails and utilize facilities, toilets and camp rings provided.

## Flood Rehabilitation

Alberta Environment and Parks is leading the restoration of backcountry trails on public lands impacted by the 2013 flood. For your safety and the safety of trail workers, please be aware of construction projects on trails and avoid temporary closure areas. Closures will be posted at trailheads and on the BTFR Program Web Map.

For updated information on flood rehabilitation projects, closures and reroutes please visit the BTFR website at: [www.backcountryflood.alberta.ca](http://www.backcountryflood.alberta.ca)

# Public Land Use Zone Rules – Know the Law

## General

- You shall comply with the lawful orders, instructions and directions of an Officer.
- You shall comply with the instructions, prohibitions, and directions contained in signs and notices posted by or at the request of an Officer on or about the Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ), Public Land Recreation Areas (PLRA) or Public Land Recreation Trails (PLRT).
- An Officer may order a person within the PLUZ, PLRA, and PLRT to refrain from doing anything that in the opinion of the Officer is dangerous to life or property or detrimental to the management of or use of any road, trail or route within that PLUZ, PLRA, and PLRT.
- While in a PLUZ, PLRA or PLRT you shall keep the land and improvements in a condition satisfactory to an Officer.
- When leaving the PLUZ you shall restore the land to a clean and tidy condition.
- You shall remove all garbage for disposal at home or at an approved garbage disposal facility.
- No cutting, removing or damaging living trees or vegetation is allowed.
- Do not deposit harmful materials such as sediment, pollution, gray water or sewage into any water or onto ice of any watercourse or water body.
- When required, fire bans and travel restrictions will be implemented.

## Motorized Vehicles

- OHVs are not allowed on numbered highways.
- You may only cross all waterbodies at bridges or lawful crossings. Crossing a waterbody anywhere other than a bridge or a designated ford is not permitted.
- Motorized users must stay on the designated trails.

## Camping

- No camping or open fires allowed within 1 km of a PRA or PLRA.
- Camping facilities must be temporary and portable.
- Limit your stay to 14 days.
- Campfires are allowed for cooking and warming purposes only.
- Campfires must be attended at all times and extinguished before leaving your site.
- Camp at least 30 m (100 ft.) from water.

## Traffic Safety Act

Under the *Traffic Safety Act* an OHV (off highway vehicle) is any motorized mode of transportation built for cross-country travel on land, water, snow, ice, marsh or swamp land or on other natural terrain

Every OHV and snow vehicle operating on public land must have the following:

- Valid registration and insurance. Operator must be able to produce documents.
- Current license plate properly affixed in a visible location.
- Red rear tail lamp capable of emitting a light visible from at least 60m (185 ft.)
- At least one front white headlamp capable of illuminating a person, vehicle or object from at least 60m (185 ft.)
- Proper exhaust muffler with spark arrestor

To operate an OHV on Alberta public lands, people from another jurisdiction must:

- Carry proof of residency
- Follow the rules regarding registration of the vehicle and the display of license plate as required by their home jurisdiction.
- Produce valid proof of insurance.

If you have been in Alberta for more than 30 days all Alberta requirements apply.

Operators under 14 years of age must be supervised by an adult.

Visitors who do not follow the rules may be fined or charged under the provincial legislation.

## Wildfire Prevention

- Whenever possible, use a stove for cooking.
- Be sure to select a site away from dry grass, heavy bush, leaves, peat areas and overhanging branches.
- When creating a campfire, dig down to mineral soil. Create a ring with stones, gravel or sand around the rim to contain embers and hot ashes.
- Ensure you have a shovel and a container full of water on hand to extinguish your campfire.
- Make sure your campfire is extinguished. Never leave a fire unattended. “Soak it, Stir the ashes, Soak it again”.
- Check for campfire restrictions at [www.albertafirebans.ca](http://www.albertafirebans.ca)
- Report wildfires to 310-FIRE.

## Avoiding Wildlife Conflicts

The Bighorn Backcountry is home to many species of wildlife. For information on wildlife in the area and avoiding wildlife conflicts please refer to Alberta BearSmart, and Cougar and Outdoor Recreation at [www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca)

### If you encounter a bear:

- Do not approach or disturb the bear.
- Slowly back away while talking in a firm, low voice.
- Do not make eye contact.
- Keep your backpack on your back.
- Have bear spray accessible at all times.

### If you encounter a cougar:

- Immediately pick up your children and pets.
- Do not turn your back.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Fight back if it attacks.

bear print



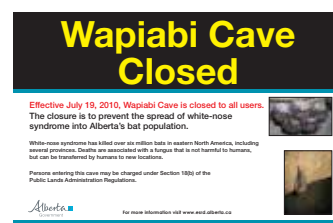
cougar print



## Caving - Wapiabi Cave is closed

**Wapiabi Cave is closed** to prevent the spread of White-nose Syndrome to bats. Please ensure that you take the necessary steps to prevent the spread of White-nose Syndrome to local bat populations.

For more information on White-nose Syndrome see: [www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca)



## Know Before You Go

As a user of the Bighorn Backcountry, it is your responsibility to ensure you are adequately informed of trail closures, appropriate usages and rules.

Visitors who do not follow the rules may be fined or charged under the provincial legislation.

For more information, look for area kiosks.

To learn more about Public Land Use Zones and the Bighorn Backcountry, including trail updates, visit the AEP website at [www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca). For detailed wildfire information and updates visit [www.wildfire.alberta.ca](http://www.wildfire.alberta.ca)

### Additional web resources:

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry – [www.agric.gov.ab.ca](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca)

Alberta Parks – [www.albertaparks.ca](http://www.albertaparks.ca)

Parks Canada – [www.pc.gc.ca](http://www.pc.gc.ca)

Vacation Guide – [www.travelalberta.com](http://www.travelalberta.com)

Please note cell coverage is not available in most areas of the Bighorn Backcountry. Before you plan your trip let friends or relatives know the route you intend to take and your travel schedule. There are no services in the Bighorn Backcountry, no regular patrols or regular maintenance and natural and/or man-made hazards may or may not be marked. Rivers and creeks may rise quickly after a storm resulting in dangerous crossings and trail washouts. During the spring season, water bodies are often higher in the afternoon than in the morning.

In the mountains, be aware that the weather can change suddenly and temperatures can fall to freezing any time of the year. Get the latest weather forecast. For winter travel, this includes the snowfall, wind, avalanche and weather conditions.

PLUZs are not controlled for avalanches, so be prepared to properly manage avalanche related risk when travelling through this area. For more information on avalanche safety and to check avalanche hazards and terrain ratings visit [www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)



## Wheels out of Water

- Stay on the trail to avoid waterbodies, wetlands and shorelines.
- Wheeled or tracked vehicles are not allowed on beds or shores of watercourses, wetlands or waterbodies.
- Use designated crossings. Crossing the stream anywhere other than a bridge or designated ford is considered off the designated trail.
- Do not wash your vehicle in a watercourse, wetland or waterbody.



## Ride Responsibly

- Lead by example; use the trails in a safe and responsible manner.
- Slow down. Adjust your speed of travel according to trail conditions.
- Be courteous of other users and practice good trail etiquette.
- Ride when trails are dry. Avoid riding after heavy rainfall or snowmelt.
- Motorized users must yield to non-motorized users. Pull over to the side, turn off your engine and remove your helmet when horses are approaching.
- Reduce the spread of invasive species by washing your vehicle before entering the PLUZ.
- Ensure exhaust systems are clear of debris that may ignite and cause wildfire.
- Report unauthorized or illegal activities.



## Equestrian Use Within a Public Land Recreation Area

- Do not tie or highline horses to trees. Use provided facilities or your trailer. If tying to trailers, horse must not be able to reach the drip line of any tree.
- Electric fences are not permitted in staging or camping areas.
- All sites must be cleaned of manure and excess feed before leaving. Use provided manure disposal sites for manure only.
- Use weed free feed and hay.
- All remaining feed must be disposed of at home. Do not leave any feed behind.
- Avoid grazing wherever possible.
- When accessing water, use hard ground surfaces and avoid soft ground conditions to prevent bank erosion.



## Human Waste

Human waste and associated paper products are a concern in the backcountry. Outdoor backcountry toilets have been installed along many high-traffic trails and lake destinations. These toilets are not intended for garbage, food items and food waste, diapers, metal or glass. The pathways to the backcountry toilets are signed, with the toilets located away from main traffic for privacy.



# What are Public Land Use Zones?

The Bighorn Backcountry is divided into six distinct areas called Public Land Use Zones.

A Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ) is an area of land to which legislative controls are applied under the authority of the *Public Lands Act*.

A PLUZ is created specifically for that landbase and the conditions that exist within it. Each PLUZ can vary greatly on what is or is not permitted.

The following are the PLUZs of the Bighorn Backcountry:

	<b>Blackstone/Wapiabi</b>	<b>Job/Cline</b>	<b>Kiska/Willson</b>	<b>Upper Clearwater/Ram</b>	<b>Panther Corners</b>	<b>Dormer/Sheep</b>
<b>Type of Use</b>	Provides a year-round network of trails for non-motorized and equestrian use. No motorized recreation access permitted.	Provides non-motorized and equestrian use with some additional seasonal access trails for equestrian use. Provides motorized off-highway vehicle use on designated trails with seasonal access.	Provides a large network of trails for non-motorized and equestrian use, with additional seasonal access trails for equestrian use. Provides motorized off-highway vehicle use on designated trails, many with an additional	Provides year-round access for non-motorized and equestrian use. Provides motorized off-highway vehicle use on designated trails with seasonal access. Access in some areas requires written approval from an Officer.	Provides a year-round network of trails for non-motorized and equestrian use. No motorized recreational access is permitted.	Provides year-round access for non-motorized and equestrian use. Provides motorized off-highway vehicle use on designated trails.
<b>Boating (Motorized)</b>	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Permitted - Only permitted on the North Saskatchewan River and Abraham Lake.	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
<b>Camping (Primitive)</b>	Permitted No cutting of live green trees; garbage must be removed; no permanent camp	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted structures to remain without	Permitted authorization; limit your stay to maximum 14 days.	Permitted
<b>Helicopter Access</b>	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted without authorization.	Permitted
<b>Motorized Recreation Off-Highway Vehicle (OHVs)</b>	Not Permitted	Permitted - Allowed on designated trails within the timing restrictions (see map), unless otherwise posted.	Permitted - No OHVs allowed on Pinto Lake and Aylmer trails. A few trails have timing restrictions (see map). Remaining existing trails available year-round, unless otherwise posted.	Permitted - Allowed on designated trails within timing restrictions unless otherwise posted. One section requires written approval from an Officer (see map).	Not Permitted	Permitted - All existing trails open year-round, unless otherwise posted.
<b>Motorized Recreation (On-Highway Vehicles)</b>	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Permitted - Permitted on highways and secondary roads, or where posted.	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Permitted - Permitted on highways, secondary roads, industrial roads where public access is not restricted, or where posted.
<b>Recreational Equestrian Use</b>	Permitted - Equine tethered at least 100 metres (328 feet) away from lakeshores.	Permitted - Equine tethered at least 100 metres (328 feet) away from lakeshores. Timing restrictions on the following trails: Allstones Creek, Waterfalls Creek, Landslide Lake and Lake of the Falls (see map).	Permitted - Equine tethered at least 100 metres (328 feet) away from lakeshores. Timing restrictions on Allstones Creek trail (see map). Remaining existing trails available year-round, unless otherwise posted.	Permitted - Equine tethered at least 100 metres (328 feet) away from lakeshores.	Permitted - Equine tethered at least 100 metres (328 feet) away from lakeshores.	Permitted - Equine tethered at least 100 metres (328 feet) away from lakeshores.
<b>Wagon Use</b>	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Permitted - Wagon accessible trails	Permitted - Wagon accessible trails	Permitted - Wagon accessible trails	No Permitted
<b>Snow Vehicle Use</b>	Not Permitted	Permitted - Allowed on designated trails and random sledding areas, within the timing restrictions, (see map) unless otherwise posted.	Permitted - No snow vehicles allowed on Pinto Lake and Aylmer trails. A few trails are closed to snow vehicles due to timing restrictions. Remaining existing trails available for use, snow cover permitting, unless otherwise posted.	Permitted - Allowed on designated trails and random sledding areas, within the timing restrictions, unless otherwise posted (see map).	Not Permitted	Permitted - All existing trails available for use, snow cover permitting and unless otherwise posted.



The following are the PLRAs (Public Land Recreation Areas) of the Bighorn Backcountry:

Type of Service	Blackstone Gap PLRA*	Hummingbird PLRA*	Cutoff Creek PLRA*	Crescent Falls PRA**	Eagle Creek PLRA*	Panther Corners PLRA*
Information Kiosk	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Toilets	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Garbage Removal	No	No	No	No	No	No
Fire Ring	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Bear Pole	No	No	No	No	No	No
Day Use Parking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overnight Parking	not yet constructed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Overnight Camp Site	not yet constructed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Equestrian Tie Facility	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manure Disposal Site	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
OHV Use Permitted	Yes	Yes	Yes	***	Yes	No

\* Public Land Recreation Area (PLRA)

\*\* Provincial Recreation Area (PRA)

\*\*\* OHV staging permitted from upper parking lot only

# Bighorn Backcountry



- ### Legend
- Backcountry Toilets
  - Gasoline
  - Gate
  - Horse Drawn Wagon
  - Information Kiosk
  - Interpretive Trail Pedestrian
  - Lookout Tower
  - Patrol Cabin
  - Sanitary Landfill Site
  - STARS** Medical Evacuation Site
  - Travel at Your Own Risk
  - Paved Highway
  - Gravel Road, two lane
  - Gravel Road, one lane
  - Ecological Reserves, Wilderness Areas, Natural Areas, Provincial Recreation Areas, Wildland Parks
  - Lakes and Rivers
  - Creeks
  - Glacier, Icefield
  - Wildlife Corridor
- ### Environment and Parks Sites
- Off-highway Vehicle, Snow Vehicle or Equestrian Access May Be Permitted.
- Backcountry Campsite
  - Parking/ Staging
  - Public Land Recreation Area
    - backcountry toilet and/or informal campsite
    - rustic facilities (vary between locations)
- ### Alberta Parks Sites
- (Off-highway Vehicle, Snow Vehicle or Equestrian Access Not Permitted Unless Otherwise Posted)
- Campground
  - Day Use Area
- D1 to D17 Points on the map blowouts that correspond to signs located at trail intersections.  
 DA to D1  
 H1 to H10  
 CC1 to CC9  
 T1 to T9
- ### Trail Classification
- Bighorn Backcountry Public Land Use Zones Boundary
  - Major trails (only non-motorized use is permitted, unless otherwise posted). (Major trails in the blowout maps are represented with a white dotted line.)
  - Minor trails and seismic lines (only non-motorized use permitted, unless otherwise posted).
  - Trails with timing restrictions for off-highway and snow vehicles. Year-round use for all non-motorized users is permitted, unless otherwise posted. **Open for off-highway vehicle use July 1 - February 1. Open for snow vehicle use July 1 - April 30.**
  - Trails with timing restrictions for off-highway and snow vehicles. Year-round use for all non-motorized users is permitted, unless otherwise posted. **Open for off-highway vehicle use December 1 - February 1. Open for snow vehicle use December 1 - April 30.**
  - Trails open year-round to non-motorized users unless otherwise posted. Trails closed year round to motorized users. Snowmobile users must obtain a permit for trail use between January 1 - April 30 if adequate snow conditions allow travel.
  - Trails with timing restrictions for equestrian users. All other non-motorized users permitted year-round, unless otherwise posted. Off-highway and snow vehicles not permitted on these trails.
  - Trails that are open year-round for motorized off-highway vehicles, snow vehicles and non-motorized users, unless otherwise posted.
  - Random sledding area. Areas allowing snow vehicle use anywhere within the designated area during specific time periods. Off-highway vehicles not permitted in these areas except on designated trails. Year-round use for non-motorized users permitted, unless otherwise posted.
  - Trails that have been temporarily closed to OHV usage due to severe erosion or washout. They will remain closed until maintenance can be performed or new routes approved/created.
  - Trails with timing restrictions for off-highway and snow vehicles. Year-round use for non-motorized users is permitted, unless otherwise posted. **Open for off-highway vehicle and snow vehicle use July 1 - April 30.**

On-highway vehicle access is permitted on existing clearings/trails up to 75 metres (246 feet) beyond Highway 11 and Highway 734 (Forestry Trunk Road) Right-of-Way unless otherwise posted.

Trail access may be amended, modified or closed by an Officer in response to fires, fire hazard, flooding, wildlife or other environmental and safety concerns. Please ensure you have the most recent information on the area you are travelling to before you arrive and obey all posted signs and notices.

Ensure you are aware of the regulations and guidelines when travelling into adjacent areas from the Bighorn Backcountry. This map is intended to provide a general orientation to the Bighorn Backcountry. All trail locations are approximate and some trails may not appear on this map. The suggested map series for detailed topographic information is the National Topographic Series (NTS).

Alberta Environment and Parks - Clearwater Area  
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 Base Data Provided by the Spatial Data Warehouse Ltd.

Portions of recreational trail layer data provided by Alberta TrailNet Society on behalf of the Provincial Trail Map Project, its participating project partners and members of the Bighorn Backcountry Steering and Standing Committees.

Information as depicted is subject to change, therefore the Government of Alberta assumes no responsibility for discrepancies at time of use.



## Getting There

Use the map on the reverse side as a general guide to your destination. Key roads to and within the area are Highway 11, a paved provincial road; and the all-weather, gravel Highway 734 (Forestry Trunk Road), Highway 752; and the Coal Camp Road west of Sundre. Other access points to the Bighorn Backcountry are along dry-weather roads and truck trails, which may not be passable by all vehicles or in inclement weather.

## For More Information

Contact the nearest Alberta Environment and Parks Office or visit [www.aep.alberta.ca](http://www.aep.alberta.ca)

Rocky Mountain House  
403-845-8250

Drayton Valley  
780-542-6616

Sundre  
403-638-3805

Alberta Parks - RMH  
403-845-8349

You can access Alberta government offices toll-free from anywhere in the province by dialing 310-0000 and then entering the area code and seven-digit phone number.

For further information on fire bans, dial toll-free 1-866-FYI-FIRE (1-866-394-3473) or [www.albertafirebans.ca](http://www.albertafirebans.ca)

To report a wildfire, dial **310-FIRE (310-3473)** anywhere in the province. For daily fire hazard information, fire weather forecasts and fire situation reports, visit [www.wildfire.alberta.ca](http://www.wildfire.alberta.ca)

To report hunting and fishing violations, and public land abuses dial Report-A-Poacher at **1-800-642-3800**.

Environmental Spill & Incident Reporting  
at **1-800-222-6514**



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