

Recommended Precautions for Water and Food Affected by Fire Retardants

Forest fires are a natural ecological process. In BC forest fires are common in the summer and fall months. The [BC Wildfire Branch](#) uses fire retardant to reduce the size and impact wildfires can have on our forests and communities. Most fire retardants currently in use are formulated from a product called *Phos-chek*.

A product called *Firetrol* has been used in the past and is now being phased out. *Phos-chek* and *Firetrol* contain low environmental toxicity however precautions are recommended for water supplies and food crops affected by fire retardants. For more information please see [Health and Safety Around Fire Retardants/Suppressants](#).

WATER QUALITY

For individuals who are on a **community water system**:

- Questions about the quality of drinking water should be directed to the local water supplier (e.g. municipality, utility provider, etc.). These suppliers are best able to assess how their systems have been affected and whether there is any impact on the quality of drinking water.
- Community water systems where fire retardant was used in their watershed area will have increased monitoring for changes in water quality. Public notifications will be issued if there is some level of risk or uncertainty associated with drinking water use.

For those on **private water systems (e.g. individual wells)** that suspect their water supply may have been affected by a fire:

- Use an alternative source of drinking water until the water source can be assessed or tested.
- Test private surface and ground water sources affected by fire retardant application to ensure compliance with the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines. Sample bottles can be provided by water testing laboratories. For information on having your private water source tested, please refer to the list of [Provincial Health Officer Approved Drinking Water Testing Laboratories](#) (pdf).

FOOD SAFETY

VEGETABLES

In areas where fire retardant has been directly applied, consumption of vegetables from gardens, forest or alpine areas to which retardant has been applied is not recommended.

FRUIT

In areas where fire retardant has been directly applied to fruit bearing trees or berry bushes (e.g. raspberries, apples, blueberries, soft fruits): the current risk evaluation information is incomplete. As a precaution, consumption of fruit from gardens, forest or alpine areas to which retardant has been applied is not recommended.

ANIMAL FODDER

In areas where fire retardant has been applied to animal fodder (e.g. hay, alfalfa, corn, etc.) please speak with the [Ministry of Agriculture](#) about information on recommendations.

ANIMAL HEALTH

If you have questions on animal health, please speak to your local veterinarian.