

Extreme Fire Hazard Rating hits Caledon with Open Air Fire Ban

By **Riley Murphy**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The current fire hazard rating for Caledon is extreme; an open-air fire ban has been issued for Caledon.

The ban applies to all open-air and agricultural fires, including recreational fires.

This includes campfires, brush burning, and other outdoor burning activities.

Fueled appliances such as propane or natural gas barbecues, smokers, griddles, fireplaces, and charcoal barbecues used for cooking are still permitted under the ban.

Fire Chief Dave Pelayo shared with The Citizen that an extreme fire hazard rating is issued when a combination of prolonged dry weather, lack of precipitation, and very low moisture in grass, brush, and vegetation creates a high probability of fires starting and spreading rapidly.

“Under extreme conditions, firefighting becomes more dangerous, and fires can quickly get out of control, putting lives, property, and natural areas at significant risk,” shared Pelayo.

Anyone found in violation of the ban could face a minimum fine of \$245.

In addition, the Town may bill for firefighting services, with a minimum invoice of \$514 per fire truck per hour, plus clean-up fees and a 15 per cent administration fee.

“These costs are in place to cover the significant resources required to respond to preventable fires, which can put lives at risk, threaten property, and cause lasting damage to our natural environment,” says Pelayo.

Around homes, he urges residents to clear dry leaves, grass, and debris from around their buildings, decks, and fences, as well as store firewood away from structures and ensure that any fueled appliances are used safely on non-combustible surfaces.

Residents should avoid activities that generate sparks, such as welding or grinding outdoors, and never leave any heat source unattended.

Even when the rating returns to high, it doesn't mean residents are in the clear.

“Even under a high rating, conditions remain dry enough for fires to start and spread quickly. Residents should continue to use extreme caution with any outdoor burning that is permitted, keep a water source nearby when using fueled appliances, and avoid burning on windy days,” says Pelayo. “Regularly checking the current fire hazard rating and following all permit requirements remains important.”