

How to prepare for the reopening of a territory after a major fire

During a forest fire of very large area and intensity, it is not uncommon for the authorities of the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF), in collaboration with the SOPFEU and public security partners, to decree a prohibition on access to the forest in lands in the domain of the state and road closure, and this, in order to ensure the safety of the population concerned and to allow the SOPFEU to carry out its fire suppression operations effectively.

When MRNF and its partners determine that the situation is sufficiently safe, the territory may be reopened to traffic well before the fire is finally extinguished. Residents and vacationers are then allowed access to the site of a forest fire, in particular to see the condition of their cottage or dwelling.

With the reopening of the territory, however, it is important to remember some SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS for people who go to the site of an active fire:

- It is still an active fire. Smoke, hot spots and even flames may be present in some areas. This is quite normal at this stage of the fire. The SOPFEU is keeping an eye out and will continue to ensure the security of the territory. However, **it is better to avoid these sectors and be very careful;**
- A fire that is always active can generate smoke, especially during good weather. This can make visibility more difficult in some sectors. You have to be very careful, especially on the road.
- A lot of equipment has been deployed in the field by the SOPFEU, including pumps, hoses, rain gauges, etc. **They should not be moved or touched;**
- Many helicopters are working on fire. Places for their landing have been arranged. **These areas should be avoided and helicopters should never be approached;**
- There may be drops of water by helicopter and tanker. **We must stay away from these areas;**
- The trees and their roots may have been damaged by the fire. This can make these trees unstable. Wind and shocks can bring them down. **It is therefore important to remain vigilant when you are in the forest;**
- A fire site is very dry and has a very high flammability level. **Extra caution should be exercised to avoid any behaviour likely to start a new fire** (cigarettes, campfires,

scrap burning, mountain biking, etc.);

- Recall that **the flight ban (NOTAM) remains in force on the territory of an active fire** so as not to interfere with the SOPFEU's aviation activities;
- Finally, when a drone is seen in the SOPFEU's perimeter of operations, all air operations are stopped, until its departure. Canadian aviation regulations regarding free flight stipulate that drones **must be at least 9 km from a disaster zone**, including a forest fire, or face a fine.

CLEANING AND RECONSTRUCTION

Obviously, during a major fire, cottages and homes may have been damaged. Before undertaking cleaning and reconstruction work, it is important to check with local authorities (communities, ZEC, municipalities, MRC, etc.). It is advisable to wait until you know the available options before starting the cleaning work, in order to manage the residual materials as efficiently as possible, in accordance with the laws in force.

THE BAN ON ACCESS TO AND MOVEMENT IN THE FOREST IS LIFTED BUT SOME RISK AREAS REMAIN

The SOPFEU has demarcated "Risk Zones" where, although they are not prohibited from access, it is still not recommended to venture there if it is not necessary. It may also happen that these zones are defined only because of the forecast of smoke that may appear.

You can consult the [SOPFEU interactive map](#) to visualize these areas (in the menu to the left of the map, select "risk area" in the "Restriction in force" section).

USEFUL LINKS:

Urgence Québec: [Know what to do before, during and after a forest fire](#)

Red Cross: [A Guide to Wildfire Recovery](#)