## **Behchokǫ̀/Yellowknife Fire (ZF015) – July 30 (8:30pm)**

This fire is out of control. It was last mapped at 113,097 hectares.

***Safety information for those returning to Edzo***

**An evacuation order remains in place for Behchokǫ̀.** The Community Government of Behchokǫ̀ has announced that Edzo is expected to return tomorrow. This is good news. However, remember these things when you prepare to return:

* **Firefighters are still at work along Highway 3. Please be extremely cautious while driving. Follow any directions or signage on the ground.**
* **Fire is still active along the Highway 3 and there remains unburned fuel in the area – expect to see smoke or fire while travelling.**
* **Fire is still active around the neighbourhoods of Rae and Frank Channel. Please do not return until the Community Government of Behchokǫ̀ announces it is safe to do so.**
* **An Evacuation Alert is expected to remain in place because of these active fires, and the possibility for them to flare up once again. While the fire did not cross Frank Channel towards Edzo, it is important to be ready to leave on short notice as this fire is far from extinguished and situations can change fast.**

**Distance from landmarks**

* **Behchokǫ̀ (Rae) – reached community**
* **Frank Channel – reached area**
* Behchokǫ̀ (Edzo) – 4km east; **has not crossed Frank Channel**
* Yellowknife – 45km northwest
* Highway 3 – burned over from km 282 – km 248

**Conditions**

North winds today and a chance of 1-2mm of rain. Along with rain over the last 48 hours, this means we’re not expecting growth on the fire today – another good opportunity to get good work done. Potential for thunderstorms in the forecast – which could come with erratic winds. Safety is top-of-mind. While there is a lot of water on the ground on the west end of the fire (near Behchoko), we’re keeping our eye on the east end of the fire (towards Yellowknife) where less rain fell – meaning that moisture will evaporate faster as temperatures warm up.

**Current status**

* **19 structures are confirmed lost to this fire after an assessment was completed on Highway 3 and Stagg Lake. All losses occurred on Highway 3** – where the fire was pushed fast by extreme east winds Monday through Tuesday last week when the fire reached Rae. Three were damaged. This is a serious loss for many and our hearts go out to everyone affected.
* Our regional office will be informing those affected this week. 48 structures were saved – with the deployment of sprinklers and specialized structure protection gel units playing a role in preventing additional losses.
* The fire has not crossed Frank Channel towards Edzo.
* Structure protection continues to hold at Frank Channel – no structures lost. Most remaining fuel around the area is deciduous trees (trees that lose their leaves), which causes much less intense fire.
* The fibre optic line has not been compromised. This remains a risk going forward.
* Steps being taken now to build up protections to prevent fire becoming a threat to Yellowknife.

**Help for those who lost homes/cabins on Highway 3**

If you used your home or cabin on Highway 3 for traditional practices, like hunting, trapping, fishing, or harvesting, there may be financial help available as you work to rebuild through our hunters and trappers disaster assistance compensation programs. **If your home or cabin was lost, our staff will discuss this with you when you are informed.**

**What we’re doing**

* **Securing a perimeter around Rae:** crews will be working in and extinguished all fuel within the perimeter of the fire – working towards 300 feet in. This is a critical step to making Rae safe again. Crews have nearly completed this work to the north of the community, and more will be moved to the south to speed up progress there.
* **Securing Frank Channel:** Once Rae is in good shape at its perimeter, we will turn our attention to Frank Channel – improving upon the network of structure protection by working on putting out hotspots and securing a perimeter to protect it over the long term, and reduce the chance of spot fires towards.
* **Reconnaissance:** reconnaissance will continue to be done today as visibility has improved.
* **Addressing potential future risk to Yellowknife area:** Crews are on the way to the east side of the fire to prepare a base of operations and establish fire lines to protect against potential risk to Yellowknife. A fire retardant line has been completed from Great Slave Lake north to areas previously burned in 2014. An ignition operation is being planned to burn off vegetation between the fire and Yellowknife – this will only be done carefully, and as conditions allow. Each of these steps build protections for the City and Dettah. **The City of Yellowknife is not currently at risk.**

**Resources**

* Incident Management Team
* 8 crews
* 3 Helicopters
* Structure protection team
* Heavy equipment
* Airtankers

**Next update**

As fire activity is expected to be low over the next 24 hours, we will move to one update daily in the morning by noon for now. Critical updates to be issued as-needed.