

In this Issue

Burn Barrels

Lessons Learned

Today At Coastal

To report a Wildfire call:

1-800-663-5555

Or

*5555
on your cell phone



The High Cost of Burn Barrels

How would you like to be stuck with a bill like this:

SAN JOSE, Calif. -- A California family must pay \$750,000 for a massive 2007 wildfire that destroyed papers written by Nobel Prize-winning physicist Albert Einstein, a jury decided.

The jury came to its verdict last week against Margaret Pavese, her husband, Lawrence, and her father-in-law, Ernest, in a negligence lawsuit filed by San Jose State University chemistry professor Dan Straus.

Margaret Pavese was found responsible for starting a 195-square-kilometre wildfire after she used a metal barrel to burn paper plates and left the blaze unattended. The wildfire ended up destroying four homes and 20 outbuildings, mostly in Henry Coe State Park.



Margaret Pavese accepted sole responsibility for accidentally starting the fire, Spini said. The former Aromas-San Juan Bautista School District teacher pleaded no contest in 2009 to one misdemeanor count of failing to exercise reasonable care in the disposal of flammable materials to prevent causing an uncontrolled fire. Pavese completed 250 hours of community service and paid \$200,000 in restitution to three fire victims, including about \$40,000 to Straus for the loss of his two small cabins, an outbuilding and a trailer.

But Straus' lawyer, Dean Rossi, said the jury had a broader view of who was responsible. During the four-day trial, Rossi successfully contended that all the Paveses knew about the burn barrel and the risks it presented.

Taken in Part From: PaloAlto Online

Alberta Lessons for British Columbians

On December 14, 1997 a fire was started by a burn barrel, resulting in what is now known as the Southern Alberta Prairie Fire of 1997. The barrel was briefly left unattended, a gust of wind blew the barrel over and the result was:

- * Six homes and barns were destroyed
- * Five small bridges were burned
- * One hundred and twenty livestock were killed
- * Powerlines, fencing, corrals and water tanks were destroyed.

As a result of this fire all Albertans must obtain a fire permit during the fire season (April 1 to October 31) when using a burn barrel.

In the Coastal Fire Centre, fires are regulated by size and a burn barrel would fall under the Open Fire Regulations (Wildfire Section 10). When an Open Fire Prohibition is in place, a fire in a burn barrel is strictly prohibited.

In Alberta the government developed some guidelines on how to use a burn barrel that would mitigate some risk; these guidelines may be helpful to those British Columbians who continue to burn debris in this manner when a prohibition 2 is no longer in place, within Coastal Fire Centre jurisdiction. These guidelines include: positioning your barrel 100 feet away from any structure, place the barrel on exposed soil, with at least 3 metres clear all the way around, and cover your barrel with a metal mesh screen, never burn in windy conditions, keep firefighting tools nearby and never leave the fire unattended.

If you can not follow these guidelines consider an alternate method of disposing of your debris.



Considering Recycling over Burning!



To Date in Coastal	
Fires to Date	
Person Caused	84
Lighting Caused	3
Total Number of Fires	87
Hectares burnt	29
Number of Incidents Responded to	1048
Fire Danger Rating	
As of October 7, 2011 All of Coastal Very Low/Low	

Burn Barrels

Backyard burn barrels have been a common trash disposal method in parts of the Coastal Fire Centre for years but be aware that burn barrels are not allowed under the Open Fire Prohibition enacted on May 16, 2011.

There are multiple reasons why burn barrels are not allowed, but primarily because the fire inside them doesn't meet the definition of a campfire. The size and shape of the barrel is reminiscent of a chimney, which means that sparks can be thrown up into the air and can throw sparks a great distance.

Many people believe that outfitting their burn barrel with a screen on top will eliminate embers from escaping. This, however, only reduces the size of the embers thrown up into the air and these small particles may travel great distances.

Also people have a tendency to walk away from their burn barrels leaving them unattended.

A burn barrel is generally considered unsightly and relegated to the farthest corner of a property (sometimes an unkempt corner where other flammables or debris is present); they are often lit and left for long periods of time with no supervision. This could mean that they are generally not on mineral soil and clearances from other combustible material are not taken into account when a burn barrel is located.

Historically burn barrels have resulted in enough fires to be of concern in all jurisdictions and many municipalities are now disallowing or regulating their use.

Due to these reasons they are considered *no safer* than any other open fire that we regulate by size and recreational use.

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Today At Coastal

This year has been one of the quietest years for wildfires on record and sometimes its nice to get a breather. One of the reasons we did not have the fire starts was the fact that we did not get the lightning trails that typically run through the Coastal Fire Centre.

The second reason was the rain. Watching for a fire season to appear in the early spring and summer that did not appear meant our crews were trained and ready to go for a season that wasn't. Although we had some typical weather patterns in August it was late and the few fires we did have Coastal's crews were able to get on them quick and put them out.

Despite the quiet season our crews, stayed busy with a variety of project

work, remaining physically fit and ready to respond. Personnel were also able to help other provinces travelling to Slave Lake, Alberta, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Yukon, Washington State and Alaska.

This is the last Wildfire News for 2011 and we hope you have enjoyed it. We will prepare new material over the winter so we hope that if you have any ideas, or concerns, you let us know so that we can address them.

Please remember that 2012 is the 100th year of the Forest Service, of which, Wildfire Management Branch is a part of. Please watch for events and open houses in your area and come out and take part. The Forest Service has a long proud tradition in BC—Help us Cele-