



River Breakup Advisory

Issued at: 10:00AM, April 11, 2003
by: River Forecast Centre

River Breakup Advisory for Athabasca River at Fort McMurray

Alberta Environment has issued a **River Breakup Advisory** for the Athabasca River from downstream of the town of Athabasca to Fort McMurray although river breakup may not occur for several more days.

This year, snowpack conditions, ice measurements, and weather conditions indicate a potential for a dynamic breakup of the Athabasca River. When a dynamic breakup* develops, there is a high probability of an ice jam forming.

The development of an ice jam, its location or size, cannot be predicted. However, when a jam forms downstream of Fort McMurray, serious ice jam flooding can occur such as the ice jam flood events of 1977 and 1997. If a jam forms upstream and suddenly releases, a surge of ice and water will move downstream. The size of the surge depends on the ice jam. In 2002, an ice jam formed five kilometers upstream of Fort McMurray and no flooding occurred in Fort McMurray.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo maintains a Web site at http://www.woodbuffalo.ab.ca/info_centre/index.htm and a telephone hotline with current information on a recorded message at 780--799-8000.

*A dynamic breakup occurs when the solid ice cover is lifted by rising water levels and breaks into pieces which then move downstream with the streamflow.

With the onset of warmer Spring temperatures, ice breakup will occur in Alberta's rivers. This may result in the formation of ice jams, but not always. The location and occurrence of ice jams, and possible associated flooding, are very unpredictable. Local authorities are advised to monitor the ice covers and water levels in the rivers in their communities.

Alberta Environment is monitoring the situation. This advisory is in effect for seven days and will be updated if there is any change in conditions.