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### CURRENT STATISTICS

Fires to-date: 17

Hectares burned: 48

Human-caused: 12

Lightning-caused: 0

### BANS AND PROHIBITIONS

**Campfire:** No Ban

**Category 2:** In Effect

**Category 3:** In Effect

**Forest Use Restrictions:** No Ban

*[Prohibitions section of bcwildfire.ca for full details.](#)*

## Fire Centre Update

### FireSmart remains a priority

This time last year, the fire prevention team at the Northwest Fire Centre (NWFC) was busy attending or preparing for trade fairs, school visits and community events, but with the impact of COVID-19 on social gatherings, this year we are relying on virtual means to spread the FireSmart message. This issue of our newsletter is devoted to sharing information and resources to make your home and community more resistant and resilient to wildfire.

The NWFC is proud to recognize the Village of Burns Lake as a recipient of the national FireSmart Community Protection Achievement Award for their efforts to reduce the risk of wildfire and increase public safety by utilizing FireSmart principles.

In addition to educating about FireSmart, B.C. Wildfire Service staff work with First Nations groups, local governments, industry, and other partners to plan and execute wildfire risk reduction activities year-round. Our NWFC Officers partnered on several prescribed-fire projects scheduled for this spring that had to be postponed. When not responding to wildfires, crews are often busy with fuel reduction work in and around communities – reducing surface fuels, removing ladder fuels and thinning the forest to reduce the intensity of the wildfire. This provides our crews with a better chance of suppressing a wildfire if one starts.

The Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program provides funding and support to indigenous and non-indigenous governments to help reduce the risk and impact of wildfire on their communities. The CRI program took over from the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative (SWPI) two years ago in response to feedback from local governments. This year, 15 communities in the NWFC have received CRI funding. The application process and further information can be found on the [Union of BC Municipalities – CRI](#) website.

### Helpful Links

[Find your Local FireSmart Representative](#)

[Livelt FireSmart presentation](#)

[Bryan Reid's Top 3 FireSmart Tips](#)

[FireSmart video](#) starring NWFC's own Brad Blackwell

## FireSmart

### Reducing Fuels to Reduce Fire Behaviour

Wildland fires are a natural part of most wildland ecosystems in Canada. An increasing number of homes are built in or on the boundary of these wildland areas— this is known as the wildland/urban interface. Homeowners building and living in the wildland/urban interface, must take special precautions to protect their lives and property.

In addition to the actual building design and construction material used to construct your home, the type of plant material and the design of the landscape immediately adjacent to your home is a critical factor in determining the likelihood of your home surviving a wildfire. It is important to select fire resistant plant material and design your landscape to reduce the risk, while maintaining a functional and water smart landscape appropriate to your growing zone.

Wildfire can follow a path from a forest or grassland to your home. A wildfire moving from the tops of trees can be slowed if the trees are spaced out. It can be further slowed by flame-resistant plants and shrubs in your yard. Since plants have different flammability, consider spacing out your plants to increase your home's ability to withstand a wildfire.

For a wildfire to occur, three interdependent factors are required; heat, fuel and oxygen (The Fire Triangle). The removal of any of these factors either extinguishes or prevents a wildfire from occurring, therefore making the fire triangle a useful tool in fire prevention and firefighting.

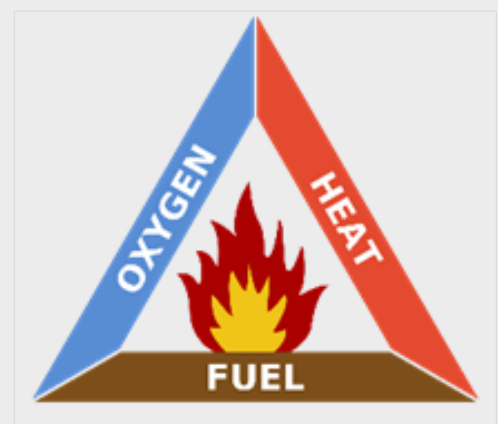
Following FireSmart landscaping tips can reduce the fuel available to a wildfire which eliminates one part of the fire triangle. This slows down the spread of wildfire as it approaches your home.

**The following three tips can significantly increase your homes survivability:**

**Yard Spacing:** Changes within 10 metres of your home, including the removal of combustible surface material, will have the biggest impact.

**Tree Spacing:** Spacing trees at least 3 metres apart will help reduce the intensity of a wildfire.

**Prune Trees:** Prune all tree branches within 2 metres of the ground.



**THE FIRE TRIANGLE**



## FireSmart

### What Homeowners Can Do to Reduce the Intensity of a Fire

Managing fire risk is a collective responsibility. With an average of more than 1,600 wildfires in British Columbia every year. Unwanted wildfires can pose a risk when they advance on to infrastructure and homes in nearby forested communities.

If you live in a fire-risk area, it's imperative that you take time to get ready for the wildfire season. By following basic FireSmart principles around your home and neighbourhood. Such as yard clean-up and long-term renovations. You reduce the risk of damage from wildfire.

As the Canadian standard recognized by all provinces and territories. The science behind FireSmart is indisputable. FireSmart principles are cost-effective, easy to follow and reduce the probability of home ignition and wildfire losses. Home survival is not random or a matter of luck.

Outlined below are the four FireSmart Home Ignition Zones and what you can do to protect your property from embers, surface fires and large flames.



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## FireSmart Cont.

### What Homeowners Can Do to Reduce the Intensity of a Fire

**NON-COMBUSTIBLE ZONE** is 0-1.5 metres surrounding your home. Otherwise called, the non-combustible zone. Within this area, ensure proper fire-resistant roofing. As well as, regular maintenance and cleaning of the gutters, decks, corners and crevices of your home. This is where needles and debris build up. Proper maintenance ensures nothing for embers to ignite.

**ZONE 1** is the 1.5 – 10 metres of your home. This should be a fire-resistant zone, free of all materials that could easily ignite from a wildfire. Move firewood piles, construction materials, storage sheds and other potentially combustible structures into Zone 2. Make sure to plant only low-density, fire-resistant plants and shrubs. Avoid having any woody debris present, since it can provide places for fires to start. Ensure any trees in the area are at least 3 metres apart and prune all branches within 2 metres of the ground. This will help reduce the intensity of a wildfire.

**ZONE 2** is 10 - 30 meters of your home. Like Zone 1, make sure to thin and prune trees to reduce hazards. Regularly clean up accumulations of fallen branches, dry grass and needles from the ground to eliminate potential surface fuels.

**ZONE 3** accounts for 30 - 100 meters of your home (or community area). In this zone, like all, look for opportunities to prune trees and keep them 3 meters apart. Remove woody debris and other potentially flammable vegetation.

FireSmart principles still apply even if you do not have direct control over the property within 100 metres. Consider talking to your neighbours, developing a FireSmart community assessment plan and setting up a FireSmart Committee to host clean-up days and provide updates on FireSmart Principles.

As community leaders, you play a crucial role in spreading actionable FireSmart disciplines. So, take these tried, tested and true recommendations and help mitigate the effects of wildfire in your community.



### FIRESMART RESOURCES

Don't forget to share and [@FireSmartBC](https://twitter.com/FireSmartBC) on your social media posts when hosting FireSmart events!

Learn more: <https://firesmartbc.ca/>

Follow FireSmart on social media: **FireSmartBC**



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## Basic FireSmart Spring Garden Clean Up Activities

In the event of a wildfire, embers and firebrands pose the greatest threat to your property.

Embers are small pieces of burning debris. Likewise, firebrands are airborne objects that travel via wind or airstreams. They can travel up to two kilometres and ignite materials on or near your home.

One of the ways to make your home more resilient to wildfires is by eliminating debris from areas where embers and firebrands are likely to collect. These areas include the roof, on and below decks or stairs, at the base of exterior walls, in gutters and vents, as well as on or in woodpiles. It is important to clear all combustible debris from these areas and to continue to inspect and maintain them throughout the season.

You can help to protect yourself, your family, and your assets by including these tasks in your spring-cleaning regimen.

### Quick-fixes:

- Remove debris such as leaves, twigs, and needles from around the house and under decks.
- Keep lawns mowed and irrigated.
- Store piles of firewood a least 10 metres from the house and preferably uphill, especially during wildfire season.
- Enclose soffits and vents to ensure embers cannot enter.
- Remove trees, bushes, and other combustible vegetation, especially within 10 meters of the home.
- Remove vegetation and small trees that could act as “ladder fuels”.

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### Maintain:

- Store flammable items when not in use, such as deck furnishings, cushions, and brooms.
- Keep surfaces and structures free of flammable materials.
- Check gutters and vents regularly to ensure they are clear of debris.

### Timely, but valuable:

- Replace shake-shingle roofs with a roof made of fire-resistant material such as clay tile, concrete tile, metal, or asphalt shingles.
- Replace existing siding with ignition-resistant siding.
- Cover exposed plywood with metal flashing.
- Space trees three metres apart and prune branches that are two meters from the ground.
- Remove mulch from the exterior of the home and replace with non-combustible, smooth surfaces such as concrete, crushed gravel, pavers or simply leave a one-meter-wide buffer zone of bare mineral soil around the house.
- Follow [FireSmart Guide to Landscaping](#) when choosing greenery.

**There are several resources available to help you maximize your FireSmart efforts, and protect your home:**

- [Wildfire Exposure Assessment](#)
- [Combustible Siding Fact Sheet](#)
- [Last-Minute Checklist for Protecting Your Home and Property from Wildfire](#)
- [FireSmart Home Assessment](#)
- [FireSmart Home Partners Program](#)
- [FireSmart Home Development Guide](#)
- [FireSmart Homeowners Manual](#)

### Current Ignition Trends

#### Spring wildfires are preventable.

The Northwest Fire Centre (NWFC) routinely responds to human-caused wildfires in the spring. As the snow melts, people are inclined to use fire for field and debris clearing. This year was different in that the Ministry of Environment and the B.C. Wildfire Service (BCWS) instituted early open-fire prohibitions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the prohibitions, our fire crews have responded to 10 calls that ended up being people conducting illegal burning.

We have also responded to 17 wildfires this year, all of which are confirmed or suspected to be human-caused. This number is average for our fire centre, but considering that this year is anything but average, we were hoping to have significantly fewer fires.

There are numerous ways human activity can start wildfires, either accidentally or intentionally. NWFC crews have responded to several ignitions resulting from trees on powerlines and sparks from trains, in addition to more-preventable human-caused wildfires.

The need for open-fire prohibitions will continue to be assessed by the BCWS and broader provincial government. It is imperative that the public take every precaution to prevent wildfires and help maintain the health of our first responders. There will be fires this summer that are unpreventable, and it is essential that our crews are healthy and that we have the capacity to respond.

The only fires permitted right now are campfires. Please have water and a shovel on hand when having a campfire and ensure it is completely extinguished before you leave. Remember that every wildfire has a point of ignition. The BCWS fire origin and cause specialists recently found that the Elephant Hill wildfire in 2017 was most likely caused by smoking or smoking materials such as matches, cigars, pipe tobacco, cigarettes and/or marijuana. It is essential that cigarette butts and other smok-

ing materials are extinguished and properly disposed of. Fire prevention is everyone's responsibility.

#### Over half of the wildfires in B.C. are caused by people and are preventable.

Please be careful with campfires:

- Never leave your campfire unattended
- Consider the wind conditions
- Keep the fire a reasonable distance from any flammable materials
- Keep your fire small – 0.5 meter by 0.5 meter max. The best cooking fire is small and hot
- Keep adequate hand tools and water nearby
- Make sure your fire is completely extinguished before leaving the area. Saturate the fire with water and ensure the ashes are completely cold to the touch.

Consult the [BCWS campfire safety pamphlet](#).

### Contact Information

**Report a Wildfire: \*5555 on a cell or 1-800-663-5555**

**Wildfire Information Line: 1-888-3FOREST**

**Northwest Fire Centre Reception: 250-847-6600**

**NWFC Information Officer:**

**Phone: 250-847-6639**

**Email: [BCWS.NWFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCWS.NWFCInformationOfficer@gov.bc.ca)**