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To obtain copies of the FireSmart Homeowner's Manual to share with your community go to: <https://firesmartbc.ca/resource-ordering-form/>.

## FireSmart Discipline: education



The FireSmart program has been around for a number of years, but it was originally called "Beware and Prepare" in B.C. It was handed over to a society in Alberta (Partners in

Prevention) to better develop the program's concepts and resources. The result is the national FireSmart Canada program. This program is based on both scientific and anecdotal information from a variety of sources, including the American Firewise program.

A renewed focus on fire prevention in B.C. has been accompanied by new tools and concepts to share with the public. Although education has always been a large part of the work performed by the BC Wildfire Service, it is exciting to have new tools and a new framework to work from.

One of the central tenets of the FireSmart program is that fire prevention is a "shared responsibility" and that fire prevention and/or fire risk mitigation can only be fully successful if everyone at every level is an active participant in those efforts.

Education is the driving force behind the program, so course material has been developed for anyone who wants to promote the program with Local FireSmart Representative workshops. These workshops have been delivered throughout the province and more will be held in future. You can check when upcoming workshops will be held in various B.C. communities by visiting: <https://firesmartbc.ca/events/category/course/>.

Another initiative that promotes peer-to-peer education is the "Become a FireSmart Canada Community" program. Local organizers can work together in their communities to promote FireSmart principles and help mitigate wildfire risks locally. For more information, visit: <https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/firesmart-communities/firesmart-canada-community-recognition-program/>

New FireSmart educational materials were developed this year for kids attending Kindergarten all the way up to Grade 12

students. The learning materials and activities are aimed at four different age groups:

- KinderSmart (Kindergarten-aged children)
- FireSmart Junior Officers — (Grades 1-3)
- FireSmart Ambassadors — (Grades 4-6)
- FireSmart Leaders — (Grades 7-12)

The new educational materials can be used at events, or teachers can request a BC Wildfire Service staff person to present the material directly to students.

Interactive Magnetic Boards



However, since June is a busy time of the year for our staff, the hope is that teachers or other people involved with youth will borrow the materials and deliver the programs themselves. All the necessary instructions and guides are included. For more information, visit <https://firesmartbc.ca/discipline/education/> or contact your local fire zone office to discuss borrowing the education packages.

Digital material has also been created to support fire prevention efforts, with a new website introduced by the BC FireSmart Committee (<https://firesmartbc.ca/>) and the production of several videos that can be used to educate the public about FireSmart and promote the program. The BC FireSmart Committee website offers a host of information and an online ordering platform to order FireSmart materials from ([see link on left of page](#)).

There's an adage that says, "You can't do better if you don't know better." We hope that by doing our part to educate Coastal Fire Centre residents about fire prevention, we can help everyone "do better", reduce person-caused wildfires and learn how to mitigate fire risks around their homes and communities.

How can you help? Pass it on. Send the FireSmartBC link to a friend, check out the BC Wildfire Service's Facebook site at <https://www.facebook.com/BCForestFireInfo/> for FireSmart tips every Friday, and set a good example in your own neighbourhood.

## A prescription for a healthy home

According to the *Dictionary of Natural Resource Management* by Julian and Katherine Dunster, a **prescription** is a written statement defining objectives to be attained and factors involved in activities such as prescribed fire and silvicultural treatments. The objectives are generally expressed in terms of what you want to accomplish (within certain parameters) in a particular area.

Writing a **prescription** for your own home is no different. A **prescription** is simply a plan. FireSmart provides guidelines to help you develop that plan, and you don't need a lot of money or specialized tools to take the first steps. Over time, you can continue to safeguard your property by building on your plan.

### FireSmart on a budget

If you're on a budget, start with things that cost very little to do but pay big dividends. Clear woody debris away from your home and pile it up for burning, chipping or disposal. Remember to clean out your gutters. Removing fine fuels (e.g. branches, twigs, tree leaves and needles) from your property is essential to mitigating wildfire risks.

Ember transfer is the most common way for a home to catch on fire during a wildfire. Embers from a wildfire can become airborne and these burning fuels can cause "spot fires" if they land in flammable materials that weren't removed from the property. While you are removing dry debris from around your home, take note of where most of the leaves and small twigs have collected. These are the often the same areas where embers will likely be blown during a wildfire. Take special care to keep these areas clear, so that falling embers will have less of this material available to burn.

Look at the vertical arrangement of vegetation on your property. Is there continuous fuel (e.g. grass, leaves, branches) reaching from the ground up into the crowns of trees? These are called ladder fuels because they provide a "ladder" for a fire to climb from the ground to the crowns of trees. Eliminate these ladder fuels by mowing tall grass, trimming shrubs, and pruning the lower branches of trees up to three metres above ground level.

A good resource for learning about FireSmart priority zones (and where to concentrate your FireSmart activities) can be found online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0ClodnHp2c>

### Forward thinking

If you're planning to do any renovations on your home, consider mitigating potential wildfire risks in the planning phase of your project. Use non-flammable or fire-resistant construction materials wherever possible when building or renovating your home's exterior. Consider replacing vinyl gutters and downspouts with nonflammable metal gutters and downspouts.

Use Class A roofing material. This includes tiles, slate or asphalt.

You can also use Class B pressure-treated shingles or shakes, but poorly maintained roofs with curling or broken edges will allow sparks or embers to come into direct contact with the wood below and could ignite it.

After comparing costs, you may find that the cost difference is nominal, so it would be worth the extra investment to choose a product that is considered to be FireSmart. For more information, go to: <https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/mdocs-posts/firesmart-home-assessment/>

### A FireSmart landscape

The majority of home ignitions that occur during a wildfire are the result of embers or small flames reaching the structure. Homeowners can take steps to reduce that risk, with the most important efforts occurring on and immediately around the home.

- ⇒ **Remove combustible plant materials:** Fire needs fuel to burn, so remove any unnecessary plant materials. Also, space trees and shrubs at least three metres apart and keep branches trimmed back (at least three metres clear of your roof). For trees or shrubs taller than about six metres, prune lower branches within two metres of the ground and remove dead leaves, twigs and branches from below these plants. For trees or shrubs less than half a metre high, prune branches from the lower third of the plant.
- ⇒ **Choose plants carefully:** Some plants are more resistant to burning than others. Plants that contain high amounts of resins or oil are extremely flammable and are known as pyrophytic plants. These pyrophytic plants include juniper, pine, spruce and fir trees. The natural oils and resins in conifers make them burn quickly and easily. The shape and spread of conifers also create what is known as a fire ladder — a route along which a wildfire can climb and spread.
- ⇒ **Water wisely:** Although all plants will eventually burn to some degree in a wildfire, green plants will burn less quickly. Make sure that you give your plants the amount of water they need to stay healthy, without overwatering (which can promote excessive growth).
- ⇒ **Maintain your landscaping:** Dried-out, wilting or dead plants can be a fire hazard. All plants in your landscaping should be regularly pruned, trimmed and deadheaded to remove dry, dead, flammable plant material.

For more information, visit the FireSmart Canada website and download the "FireSmart Guide to Landscaping" guide at: <https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/resources-library/manuals/>

## Category 2 open fire prohibitions

In 2018, a Category 2 open fire prohibition went into effect in the Coastal Fire Centre on May 16, while in 2019 the prohibition took effect on May 30. As BC Wildfire Service staff like to think of it, that gave homeowners an extra two weeks to clean up dead and dry fuels on their properties.

A number of questions arise whenever a Category 2 open fire prohibition goes into effect. The most common questions are:

- 1) **Can I still have a campfire?** Campfires have not been prohibited as of May 31, but please monitor the BC Wildfire Service website for any changes to prohibitions, at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/fire-bans-and-restrictions>

Remember that a campfire can't be any larger than half a metre wide by half a metre high. Be responsible, be aware and be safe.

- 2) **Our community is scheduled to have a Canada Day fireworks display. Will we be able to do that?** Under the Category 2 open fire prohibition, the use of fireworks has been restricted. Local governments who do not have a burn bylaw can apply for an exemption. The organizers of the fireworks display likely have already applied for an exemption through their local BC Wildfire Service fire zone office.

Open fire prohibitions are put in place when weather indices indicate a marked change in the dryness of forests. They also take into account local knowledge, including your local fire department's input, and the experience of our staff. Implementing an open fire prohibition is not a step that is taken lightly, so we ask for your cooperation to help keep your community safe.

## Smoke

We have received a number of calls recently asking if there is a wildfire nearby, because of smoky skies in the region. The smoke that is currently being experienced throughout the Coastal Fire Centre is a result of the large wildfires burning in northern British Columbia and Alberta.

Wildfire smoke drifts at a very high altitude, eventually reaching distant urban centres. In this case, smoke has been reported in Vancouver and in Campbell River. To gain a better understanding of how smoke drifts, you can visit the FireSmoke Canada website at: <http://firesmoke.ca/>

For more information about wildfires and air quality, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/wildfire-situation/air-quality>

## Grad Fires

Many graduation events take place at the end of May and into June. They often include a late-night or overnight grad party, where the festivities may or may not include a large bonfire.

A bonfire, due to its size, would be classed as a Category 2 open fire and they are currently prohibited throughout the Coastal Fire Centre. We are asking parents to have a conversation with family members about this prohibition. To avoid a visit from police, Natural Resource Officers or Conservation Officers — and the possibility of an \$1,150 fine per person — they should only light a smaller, campfire-sized fire in a cleared area and have the means available to fully extinguish it (e.g. a shovel and at least eight litres of water).

## Prevention Blog—Alan Berry, Senior Wildfire Officer-Prevention

Hello,

On May 28, the Coastal Fire Centre implemented a Category 2 open fire prohibition to limit the risk of a wildfire occurring. Category 2 open fires include “backyard burning” fires no larger than two metres high and three metres wide. Category 2 open fires are a leading cause of wildfires in the Coastal Fire Centre when they're not managed properly.

The most common ways that backyard burning causes wildfires are:

1. The fire is lit but changing conditions cause the fire to escape.
2. The person managing the fire leaves it unattended and it spreads beyond the intended burn area.
3. The fire is incorrectly thought to have been extinguished, only to reignite and spread later on.

This third cause has been occurring more frequently this spring, due to the unseasonably dry conditions — causing people to think that their fires are extinguished when they're really still smouldering underground and can start burning again when people have left the burn site. I'm asking folks to revisit any areas where they were conducting open burning this spring to make sure that the fire is completely out and dug-up ashes are cold to the touch.

Campfires are still permitted within the Coastal Fire Centre's jurisdiction, but remember to check with your local fire protection agency, since many communities manage open burning through local bylaws.

**Fires to Date  
Since  
April 1, 2019**

Total 33

Lightning 0

Person 33

**Number of  
fires since  
May 16, 2019**

Total 6

Lightning 0

Person 6

**Fire Danger  
Rating today**



**Current Prohibitions  
(within BCWS  
jurisdictional area)**

**Category 2 Open  
Fire Prohibition  
Throughout the  
Coastal Fire  
Centre**

# Coastal Fire Centre

# Wildfire news

## At Coastal

There have been 33 human-caused wildfires in the Coastal Fire Centre since April 1, 2019. There have been no lightning-caused wildfires. At midday on May 28, 2019, a fire was reported to the Coastal Fire Centre. It was located on Nelson Island, near Annis Bay. The fire was originally reported to cover about one hectare, but was subsequently downsized to 0.6 hectares. Firefighting resources assigned to this incident included: one officer, one three-person initial attack crew, and two helicopters. The helicopters bucketed the fire on the first day and were able to knock it down to a Rank 1 wire (a rolling ground fire) so the ground crews could work on it. By the second day, the fire's status was listed as "being held".

On May 29, 2019, a wildfire exercise was completed near the top of the Fitzsimmonds Express chairlift at Whistler Blackcomb Resort. Similar exercises have been held at the site for the past 10 years and they are great learning and training opportunities for fire response staff at the resort, the Whistler Fire Rescue

Service and the BC Wildfire Service. A fire on a ski hill is unique, since firefight-

ers must work around (or use) existing infrastructure. A ski hill often has plumbing in place for snow-making equipment, so it may have a water supply available. However, there are also overhead hazards due to chairlifts and other overhead cables, and networks of hiking and biking trails that have to be taken into consideration.

Currently, the Coastal Fire Centre is supporting firefighting efforts in Alberta with the provision of two Unit Crews (20 firefighters per crew), one Initial Attack Crew (three people) and three other personnel (radio operator, division supervisor and a taskforce leader). We also have staff assigned to Incident Management Teams that are currently in Alberta and in Dease Lake.



## Weather

**SYNOPSIS:** (Today-tomorrow) Little change in pattern or weather today except the instability along the eastern border has moved further east and no lightning will pop up today. Temperatures increased a few degrees yesterday and will remain at that level again today. Humidity is for the most part moderate and values less than 20 percent are unlikely today. Afternoon inflow winds reach 15 and possibly 20 km/h through the usual windy inland mainland valleys. These gusty winds trigger a Fire Behaviour Advisory again today. Tomorrow the upper ridge begins to weaken while the surface pressure gradient increases resulting in decreasing temperatures and somewhat stronger winds. The ridge weakens because a Pacific trough crosses the Mid-coast late today causing the ridge to shift eastward. Patchy clouds move into the Bella Coola area and a few shows reach the outer mainland coast and Haida Gwaii. Shower bands drift down the coast but then the system appears to dissipate early Saturday. Very warm weather continues south of a Menzies Camp to Scar Creek line all through

Saturday afternoon. Also expect the usual afternoon inflow winds in the eastern Fraser zone.

**OUTLOOK:** (Sunday-Tuesday) Sunday starts mostly sunny except up Haida Gwaii way but with the ridge pattern collapsing, afternoon temperatures fall off a few degrees and by late in the day a more general cloud band drifts in ahead of the advancing weak frontal trough. However, this system then weakens early Monday and mostly warm (but not hot) dry weather continues for southern zones through Tuesday. Haida Gwaii, the Mid-coast and northern Vancouver Island see a few showers through this period but significant rainfall is unlikely.

**6 TO 10 DAY:** (next week) Around next Wednesday a stronger frontal band reaches the coast to bring a few days of cloudy and cool and showery weather.