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Article in Globe and Mail (July 5, 2019) on Development Considerations: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-despite-a-recent-string-of-devastating-fire-seasons-new-developments/>

FireSmart Discipline: development considerations for communities



The phrase “development considerations” refers to using the best available scientific methods and technology — including risk modelling and analysis, and fire behaviour modelling — to help local governments and land use planners promote community wildfire resiliency and the increase the survivability of infrastructure during a wildfire.

In recent years, many communities in British Columbia have applied for, or received funding for, the preparation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This important document outlines strategies that the community can use to mitigate wildfire risk. Does your local government have a CWPP in place? If so, is it publicly available so all residents can read it?



Members of the public often leave this type of wildfire preparedness work to their local government, but a Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a “living document” that should be reviewed and updated regularly. It benefits from public input to keep the plan current and help keep you and your neighbours safe from wildfire threats.

The B.C. government’s Community Resiliency Investment program was established in 2018 and lets communities without a Community Wildfire Protection Plan apply for funding to get professional assistance to develop one. The BC Wildfire Service is often approached to provide advice and feedback during the planning phase of a CWPP.

Some communities are now reviewing how they allow new subdivisions to be developed and built, as part of their planning process. So how can they build wildfire resiliency into their

community plans?

While some communities endorse FireSmart principles in their overall plan, others take it a step further and hand out FireSmart brochures with every new building permit. Some planning departments recommend that applicants use more fire-resistant or fireproof products during the building’s construction. Some towns and cities are looking at their overall building development scheme, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of structure-to-structure ignitions (where a fire spreads from one building to another). Others are looking at ways to incorporate parks or greenspace that would act as fuel breaks during a fire.

There’s a lot that can be done in this area. Although some changes can be made fairly quickly (such as recommending or requiring that certain types of building materials be used in the construction of homes), other changes can take years to implement.

Changing how neighbourhoods are laid out can take time and may be costly, since current land ownership and pre-existing infrastructure must be taken into account. However, if members of the community support these kinds of changes, it can be done.

Although it may sometimes seem like local governments are slow to embrace these ideas, it’s important to remember that large organizations have a lot to consider before they can move forward with new programs. Sometimes the best thing citizens can do is lead by example. Make FireSmart the norm in your own neighbourhood and your local government can follow suit as new opportunities for funding and promoting the FireSmart program arise.

Aircraft—Guiding Principles/Roles and Responsibilities

The Aviation Management Philosophy of the BC Wildfire Service is based on the following:

- The use of aircraft is considered a high-risk activity, and safety considerations must be addressed in all aspects of flight planning and operations.
- The use of aircraft is an integral and substantial part of our wildfire management activities.
- The cost-effective use of aircraft should be a primary consideration.
- Aircraft are a finite resource, both in number and type.
- Aircraft must be managed by trained specialists that are certified in their role.

When using aircraft to achieve specific firefighting objectives, it is essential to understand the roles of the people assigned to managing aircraft during a wildfire incident.

An Air Operations Branch Director (AOBD) reports directly to the BC Wildfire Service’s “Operations” group and is responsible for providing expert advice on all aviation-related activities required to support an Incident Action Plan. The Air Operations Branch Director needs to ensure that the stated objectives are achievable and will not compromise the safe, legal, efficient and effective use of aircraft attached to the wildfire incident. The AOBD will also monitor the use of aircraft and ensure that appropriate resources are allocated continuously, by recommending adjustments as required.

An Air Support Group Supervisor (ASGS) is only used on large wildfire incidents. If more than one helibase is needed to fight a fires (due to the distances involved or the size of the wildfires), then an Air Support Group Supervisor may set up and manage an auxiliary site at the direction of the Air Operations Branch Director. The secondary base acts as a branch of the air support group, but takes direction from the Air Operations Branch Director.



The Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO) manages all assigned helicopter missions. The Helicopter Coordinator identifies where helicopters are working, ensures that they are working within the allocated air space, and ensures that the assigned helicopters have takeoff and landing patterns established for each helibase and helispot. The Helicopter Coordinator is also responsible for receiving and managing flight requests

for aircraft that are not related to that specific wildfire to enter the restricted airspace, and for staying informed about air traffic related to other incidents that may impact air operations.

The Helibase Manager (HEB) is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of a helibase. Part of the Helibase Manager’s job is determining how far apart the helicopters must be spaced (according to their specifications), establishing approach and departure paths, and making sure that the base remains free of debris. The Heli-base Manager also maintains flight manifests, does load calculations and controls all ground movement on or near the site.

The Air Attack Officer (AAO) is accountable for all airtanker activities on a wildfire incident and takes strategic direction from the Provincial Airtanker Center Coordination Officer (PATCO). The Air Attack Officer will discuss tactics and objectives with the onsite Incident Commander (or designate) to agree on an attack strategy and confirm that the mission is achievable. The Air Attack Officer makes suggestions, recommendations and decisions that are consistent with capabilities of the fixed-wing airtanker being used, and with provincial firefighting priorities. Any engagement of airtanker resources must be consistent with the mandate to be “safe, effective and efficient.”



HELIBASE— is the location from which incident helicopter support missions are flown, and where the helicopters assigned to that base are parked, serviced, and refueled.

HELIPAD/HELISPOT—a landing and takeoff area for a single helicopter.

Development Considerations for Homeowners

Fire officials, communities, neighborhoods, individual residents and people involved in making planning decisions all need to work together to minimize fire risks. Land use planning is just one way how local governments can start to mitigate those risks in their communities.

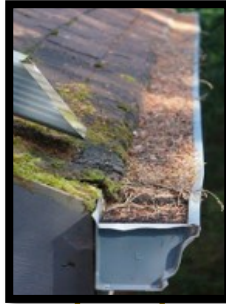
It's often thought that the FireSmart discipline "development considerations" only refers to large tracts of land or subdivisions, but many of the same principles can address fire safety issues on private land.

For instance, do you know whether you live in an area where a local fire department will respond if you report a fire, or is your home outside of its response area? This is something to consider when purchasing a property, since many people take it for granted that a fire department will automatically respond if they need help. People moving from urban areas to more rural areas may not even question whether their new home lies in a jurisdiction that has a responding fire agency, because perhaps it's not something they had to consider previously.

Do you live in an area that only has only one road leading in and out? Is there an alternative route available if you need to leave in a hurry? Is your driveway wide enough for an emergency vehicle (such as a firetruck or a BC Wildfire Service vehicle) to get through? Is your home's address clearly visible from the road? These are all important questions.

Many local governments are looking at how they can mitigate wildfire risks that their communities face, either by developing fuel breaks or managing fuels close to their towns and around subdivisions. A few local governments even require that FireSmart principles be included as part of the planning process when new subdivisions are developed. This is an impressive step when you consider all the different interests that local governments must balance.

While it can take time to incorporate these modifications on a larger scale, there is no end to the changes that can be made on



private property. Understanding FireSmart principles and how they work is essential for property owners who want to mitigate wildfire risks around their homes and in their neighbourhoods.

Many homes that get destroyed by fire in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are ignited through "ember transmission", when embers from a wildfire become airborne and land on (and subsequently ignite) combustible elements of residential structures and/or nearby materials. The risk of ignition due to ember transmission can be significantly reduced by embracing FireSmart recommendations for the "non-combustible zone", which includes the house and a 1.5-metre buffer zone all around it.

The same principles that land use planners are using to plan townscapes and cityscapes can be used by individual homeowners on smaller plots of land. Fuel mitigation is crucial, and removing dead and dying vegetation from your property is the first step.

One of the most important things you can do to protect your property is to ensure that the non-combustion area (0-1.5 metres around your home) is clear of combustible material. Remove flammable debris (such as leaves or tree needles) from your roof and gutters, enclose areas under your deck and around your home's eaves, and remove any highly flammable vegetation from the non-combustible zone.

Taking these steps can not only significantly reduce the level of risk for your home, but also for the homes of your neighbours. A FireSmart home development guide is available online at: https://www.firesmartcanada.ca/images/uploads/resources/FSCanada_HomeDevBooklet_5.5x8.5-V6-Mar20.pdf.



Prevention Blog

Hello,

It has certainly been an unusual summer for us in the Coastal Fire Centre, with a dry spring transitioning into a rather average July.

Rainfall has helped keep the fire hazard in check in most parts of the fire centre. The one anomaly continues to be southeast Vancouver Island, where drought codes remain above average. The drought codes in other areas of the fire centre have hovered around average values for this time of year.

Drought codes are useful indicators of the dryness of forest fuels and the amount of smouldering that could occur in deep duff layers and large logs if a wildfire occurs. When drought codes are high in an area, it doesn't take more than a few days of hot and dry weather for fire danger ratings to rebound to "high" or "extreme", so we are definitely not out of the woods yet.

August and September are usually the busiest months for human-caused — and entirely preventable — wildfires in the Coastal Fire Centre. I urge everyone to not get complacent about fire safety in the coming weeks.

As the wildfire risk increases, the BC Wildfire Service will continue to monitor the situation to determine whether it will be necessary to prohibit campfires and restrict other high-risk activities. For the latest news on fire prohibitions and restrictions, visit the BC Wildfire Service website at: www.bcwildfire.ca

Thanks for reading,

Alan Berry, Senior Wildfire Officer—Prevention

Fires to Date Since April 1, 2019

Total	104
Lightning	35
Person	68

Number of fires since July 12, 2019

Total	9
Lightning	1
Person	5
Undetermined	3

Fire Danger Rating today



Current Prohibitions (within BCWS jurisdictional area)

Category 2 Open Fire Prohibition throughout the Coastal Fire Centre.

Campfire and Category 3 prohibitions have not been implemented yet.

Go to BCWildfire.ca for the latest information.

At Coastal

There are currently 8 active fires in the Coastal Fire Centre. 4 of those fires were human-caused and 4 are the result of lightning. Among the 8 active fires 4 are considered 'Out of Control' while 4 have been upgraded to 'Under Control'.

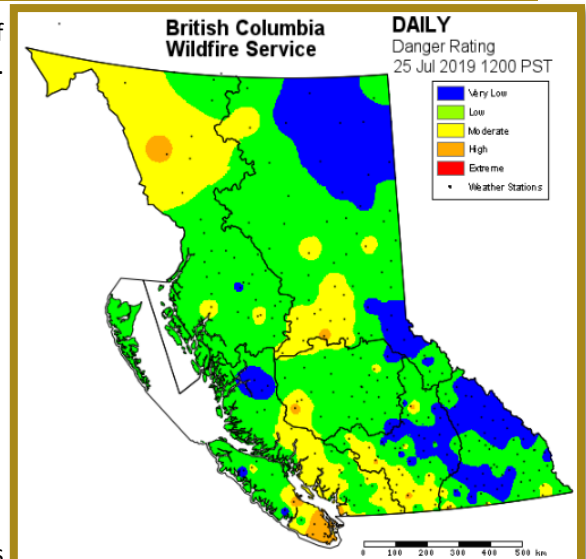
Out of Control

- V80874—Call Inlet—Modified Response
- V90910—McGregor Lake—Modified Response
- VA0920—Nusash Creek—Modified Response
- V91030—North Klinaklini River—10 personnel assigned

Under Control

- V51075—Port Mellon—Patrol
- V80804—East Canton Mainline—Modified Response
- V90907—McKenzie Sound—Modified Response
- VA1092—Hammer Road—Patrol

The Coastal Fire Centre is continuing to support other provinces with 28 personnel (including one Unit Crew) in Alberta and 2 single resources in the Yukon. This does not include Coastal staff who are members of Incident Command Teams who are currently deployed in the Yukon.



Weather

SYNOPSIS: Warm and sunny conditions continue throughout much of the South Island, Fraser, and Pemberton zones today with similar or higher winds and similar or lower humidities (significantly lower in some areas) than were seen yesterday. Temperatures and humidities are moderated slightly by variable bands of cloud passing over the Mid Island and Sunshine Coast today. Progressively cloudier and wetter weather will be seen to the north as more organized bands of frontal moisture continue to push slowly inland/onshore. Scattered showers or occasional rain favours upslope areas in a southwesterly or westerly flow north of roughly Tofino – Powell River by sunset. A cold front and associated upper trough swing inland over the region tonight, bringing elevated and at times gusty winds to many areas as well as scattered convective showers, again, favouring upslope areas in a westerly flow for the greater amounts (good chance of isolated thundershowers embedded). Lingering low level moisture should result in extensive low cloud and/or fog in many areas Saturday morning – mainly tied to areas that pick up the most rain over the next 18 hours. Elevated early morning winds could help clear low cloud out from some areas earlier than others. Otherwise, high pressure should bring partly sunny to mainly sunny skies Saturday afternoon. Weak outflow conditions Saturday night could result in only fair recoveries in

mid-elevation sites of the south that pick up little to know rain today/tonight.

OUTLOOK: A relatively dry & stable westerly flow supports gradual warming and drying throughout all zones Sunday and Monday (weak/brief outflow conditions in some areas during the overnight/early morning hours helps enhance this slightly). Temperatures by Monday afternoon should rebound to the mid to potentially upper twenties throughout the warmer inland valleys of the Island and Mainland as humidities dip to the 20% to 30% range. The next Pacific frontal system and associated upper trough could approach from the west Tuesday bringing increasing winds, cloud, and isolated to scattered showers (rain in some upslope areas of the north).

6 TO 10 DAY: Seasonal temperatures, moderate humidities, elevated inflow winds and partly cloudy skies likely continue Wednesday and potentially into early Thursday in the wake of Tuesday/Tuesday night's expected frontal passage. The latest guidance continues to point to the beginning of a shift in the large-scale pattern around the August long weekend (Aug 3-4 -5) bringing hotter and drier weather as an upper ridge potentially strengthens from the southeast (four-corner ridge). This pattern is not as supportive of a particularly strong or prolonged outflow pattern as is an approaching Pacific ridge from the west.