

In this Issue:

FireSmart

Before FireSmart—
The Basics

Today At Coastal

Find out more about FireSmart:
bcwildfire.ca
&
Office of the Fire Commissioner
pssg.gov.bc.ca/firecom



FireSmart

This year saw the most wildfires recorded in a fire season in over a decade, with over 3000 fires consuming 221,000 hectares and costing taxpayers over \$300 million dollars to date. In Coastal we have had over **520** fires, with **7130** hectares burnt by wildfire. Besides the financial cost, the physical and psychological toll on fire fighters, local communities and individuals is incalculable.

FireSmart is a national initiative focused on reducing the risk of wildfire around homes and in communities in the wildland/urban interface: developments that are located within or near wildland areas.

In 1993, a wildfire raced through the suburb of Mystic Hills, north of Laguna Beach, California and when the smoke cleared, 286 homes were destroyed while one lone house was left standing amidst the destruction. This home had been built with fire prevention in mind. The lessons learned from that event have had an immense impact on the science and philosophies behind wildland/interface community preparedness.



These photos were taken after the Glen Rosa fire in Kelowna, BC. Fuels had been reduced in the areas adjacent to the structure, the fire reached the structure but caused little damage.

Does it work?

It did in the Glen Rosa fire in the Kamloops Fire Centre this year. A fuels management program had been applied and as noted in the photos below the results were impressive. Ladder fuels had been eliminated, shrubs and deadfall removed and when the fire moved through the area the fire slowed enough that the dwelling was saved.

This does not mean that FireSmart will save every home if you live in a Wildland/Urban Interface area, but wouldn't you like to reduce the risk to yourself, your home and property? The FireSmart program is useful for all people who live near the forest, plus local governments and other stakeholders.

Applying FireSmart principles to your own property may not be enough. It may take sharing the work with your neighbours, approaching local government, and asking questions about an overall approach to wildland fire safety in your area.

But the results are worth the effort.



By thinning and pruning the surrounding trees, removing any shrubs, deadfall or woodpiles, and reducing the fuels the threat of the wildfire was minimized.

To Date in Coastal

Fires to Date

Person
Caused 190

Lighting
Caused 331

Total
Number
of Fires
Actioned 521

Hectares
burnt 7130

Number of
Incidents
Responded
To this year 1813

Fire Danger Rating



Moderate—
High

Be Safe!

Before FireSmart—The Basics

Imagine you are sitting at home alone – your husband is out, your children are with their friends, your dog has just wandered off—and you get a knock at the door. You are told you have twenty minutes to evacuate your home. Are you ready? What do you do? Are you prepared?

Now what if the valley your home is in is filled with smoke so thick you can't see to the end of your driveway, the power is out all around and you can't get any more gas for your car as the gas pumps won't work. Neither your cell nor your land phone work, so you can't call your husband or children.

The clock is ticking and you know in order to accomplish anything, you must remain calm, organize your thoughts and make a plan.

This story actually happened to people during a 2003 wildfire in Barrier. Luckily everyone was safe – at the last minute the dog came running home and the homeowner was able to quickly gather some valuables and clothes into her vehicle. She and the dog were reunited with their family in an emergency centre after five nerve-wracking hours.

Today at Coastal

The Coastal Fire Centre continues to experience new fire starts, with fairly aggressive fire behaviour in areas that have dry forest fuels. Coastal also continues to support the fire fighting efforts in the interior of the province.

The Fire Danger is rebounding from low and is now predominantly moderate, with areas of high Fire Danger Rating on Vancouver Island from Parksville to Victoria. The forest fuels are drying quickly with the warm sun, dry breezes and low Relative Humidities overnight.

Category 1 & 2 continue to be restricted, and this restriction is for open fire up to 2 meters tall by 3 meters wide at the base, in any area the Coastal Fire Centre has jurisdiction. Campfires and Category 3 fires are permitted, and Cat 3 fires must be registered.

Please check with local officials for burning by-laws that may supersede our restrictions.

Life and personal safety during an emergency is always the number one priority, but there are also ways to protect your home and property, even when you are evacuated due to wildfire.

The most important step toward a FireSmart home is to educate yourself. www.pep.bc.ca/hazard_preparedness/FireSmart-BC4.pdf

What are the principles, what are the costs associated, who does it address and how are the actions implemented? The focus of the program is not only on changes to your surroundings, but a change in your mindset. Start by asking yourself what you are willing to do to protect yourself, your family and your community from wildfires.

Along with Fire Smart planning, you may need to do some emergency preparedness if you live in an interface area. For more information on what you need to do to prepare for this type of emergency, visit www.pep.bc.ca and take advantage of the tips there.

The Coastal Fire Centre is a strong supporter of the FireSmart Program and over the next few weeks, we would like to help you take the steps to becoming "FireSmart".

Weather Forecast

The weather pattern is gradually shifting from warm and dry towards cool and wet. Today the upper flow is directly out of the west with an embedded jet stream pointed at BC's north coast where more rain will fall over the next few days. The rain extends down the coast to the northern tip of Vancouver Island and will shift slightly south over the next day or so but then drifts north again Sunday. Weather today for all southern zones will be sunny and quite warm but tomorrow sees some patchy cloudiness drift in with along the already wet Mid-coast.

The ridge rebuilds briefly on Sunday and skies clear with afternoon highs in the low 20s. Then a typical Fall storm deepens offshore on Monday and crosses the coast on Tuesday. Monday showers will be followed by more organized rain Tuesday but amounts may still be slight.