



Communities are safer through FireSmart

Wildfire is a risk that all northerners need to be prepared for. Everyone has a responsibility to prepare and reduce the risk of wildfire damage – from individual home and cabin owners, to all levels of government. It’s a big job, but FireSmart offers a proven path to building more resilient communities

Wildfire 101: how it starts, spreads, and causes damage

Fire needs fuel (i.e. trees), ignition (i.e. lightning), and oxygen to start. Weather (like wind), topography (the lay of the land), and the type of fuel (i.e. spruce vs. aspen) determine how fast it can spread. Usually, when fires damage homes and communities, it’s not because of the flames. It’s because of the embers – the sparks thrown off a wildfire.

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) And You

Don’t be fooled by the term “urban.” The WUI is anywhere – from cabin areas, to hamlets, villages, towns, and cities – where the forest meets places people live. When wildfire gets here, there’s major threats to people and property.

In the NWT, WUI fires are usually rare. In 2023, we saw many. **FireSmart works to reduce threats within these areas.**

The Seven Disciplines And What They Mean

<p>Cross-training</p> <p><i>Firefighters (structural and wildfire) are trained up and aware of the tools, tactics, and considerations of each trade to facilitate stronger working relationships and more effective responses.</i></p>	<p>Emergency planning</p> <p><i>All levels of government work together on plans which will reduce community wildfire risk, and be ready and in practice when threats do come</i></p>	<p>Development considerations</p> <p><i>Communities are planned in ways that recognize the real threat of wildfire all new developments are FireSmart ones.</i></p>
<p>Education</p> <p><i>Leaders at all levels take action to ensure communities and everyone in them – from school kids, to public servants, to homeowners – are aware of FireSmart practices and how to put them in place.</i></p>	<p>Interagency cooperation</p> <p><i>Leaders from all levels collaborate early and often during</i></p>	<p>Legislation</p> <p><i>Laws are in place at all levels to ensure FireSmart principles are reflected in the law where reasonable.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Vegetation management</p> <p><i>There’s less fuel for wildfires to work with, meaning less intense fires near things we care most about, and reducing the chances of structure loss and damage when wildfire comes</i></p>		



FireSmart tools in the NWT

Here are some tools available to implement FireSmart you may be familiar with:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Wildfire Protection Plans: in place for all forested communities identifying actions to be taken to build community wildfire protection, resilience, and defensibility• Industrial guidelines for fire prevention and suppression: rules for industry to follow to avoid adding fire load during wildfire season, and ensuring they take responsibility• Wildfire Community Preparation Day Grants: offered to individuals, organizations, and communities to jumpstart FireSmart projects at the grassroots and build awareness.• Community plans: communities have the ability to plan their growth, development, and maintenance to incorporate FireSmart principles• Cross-training: some professional and volunteer structural fire departments have been trained on wildland fire management (and vice-versa).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bylaws: Bylaws may be implemented by communities which incorporate FireSmart practices• Community engagement and public awareness activities: through social media, traditional media, community events, and other means, building public awareness of FireSmart activities communities and people can take action.• Fuel breaks: clearing portions of forest surrounding communities and other values at risk• Fuel treatments: pruning and thinning the forest to reduce fuel loads and therefore lower intensity wildfires• Prescribed fire: carefully planned, intentionally set fire to meet forest management objectives which lower wildfire risks to people and property.• Community and territorial emergency planning: forms the basis for how we respond when crises hit – including wildfires
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Taking The Next Step – Together

Efforts have been made across all levels of government to implement these practices. However, coordination has been lacking.

To this end, we intend to work with regions, Indigenous governments, community governments, and other sectors of society to build territorial and regional FireSmart committees – with real representation to help drive FireSmart forward together. **The vision is for whole-of-society involvement and advice regarding wildfire mitigation projects, a forum for information-sharing and collaboration, and stronger support for implementing the seven disciplines at all level.**

Stay tuned – we’ll be in touch!

Spread The Word About FireSmart and Wildfire Prevention!

Here’s a collection of resources for you and your community to use to build awareness around wildfire, fire prevention, and FireSmart practices. The more voices, the better!

- **Click to access:** [Wildfire Prevention and FireSmart Resources For Communities](#)
- **Visit our website:** [Prepare for FireSmart with FireSmart NWT](#)