

Community **Wildfire** Response Initiative

Overview

As the frequency of intense wildfires increases across Canada (and other parts of North America), the need to be prepared for these events is becoming more important and meaningful than ever. Wildfires are the second most costly disaster, impacting all regions of Canada in one way or another. During extreme conditions, high intensity wildfires move quickly, often leaving little warning to residents in their path. Being properly prepared allows individual homeowners to feel confident in the defensibility and survivability of their homes and properties and reducing the impacts from property loss/damage, emotional distress, smoke, etc.

The **Community Wildfire Response Initiative** has been formed as a collective of five communities in the Calling Lakes region who have secured grant funding to develop a program to increase our resilience and response to a wildfire incident. The five partnered communities include: the Resort Village of B Say Tah, Resort Village of Fort San, Village of Lebret, Resort Village of Pasqua Lake, and Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation. The goal is to enable fire departments to better prepare and respond to a wildfire event through two main objectives.

1. Preparation – Forsite Consultants is developing an Emergency Resource Inventory Register consisting of volunteers, resources, and services available to assist the Fire Department in an emergency. The inventory will be displayed as a georeferenced map identifying the location, type and quantity of equipment available. (See reverse side for more information).

2. Response – To better respond to a wildfire, Forsite Consultants is working with the Fort Qu'appelle Fire Department to develop structure protection totes that could be brought to a property in the line of wildfire. The totes will contain equipment to aid in preparing a home or property for an oncoming wildfire.

In addition, an important step in wildfire preparation and response is ensuring homes and properties are less susceptible to ignition from flames, embers and heat. Properties that have been prepared and managed properly, before a fire has even started, are more defensible and are often prioritized for protection when a fire does occur. That is because structure protection kits are more effective on homes that is well maintained to resist fire, and may not work on homes and properties that are not.

Preparing your home and property to be fire-resistant can be done in several ways; by leveraging fire-resistant plants and landscaping materials, utilizing fire-resistant building materials and maintaining a yard free of vegetative debris and a build-up of fuels.

Contact your local administrator for more information.

Fire-Resistant Plants and Landscaping

| Characteristics of fire-resistant plants | Characteristics of Highly Flammable Plant |
|---|--|
| Moist, supple leaves | Contain fine, dry, dead material or loose, papery bark |
| Little dead wood and tendency not to accumulate dead material | Plants that contain volatile waxes, terpenes or oils |
| Water-like sap with little or no odour | Leaves are aromatic |
| Low amount of sap or resin material | Gummy, resinous sap with a strong odour |
| Fire Resistant Plants | Plants to Avoid |
| Poplar, Birch, Aspen, Cottonwood, Maple, Alder, Ash, Cherry | Cedar, Juniper, Pine, Tall grass, Spruce, Fir |
| Additional Considerations | |
| A mowed lawn provides more fire resistance. Keep grass cut short aids in reducing fire intensity. | |
| Keep firewood piles stacked away from buildings. | |
| Utilize fire resistant mulch in landscaping such as stones, brick and sand, as opposed to wood chips, straw and bark. | |

Fire-Resistant Building Materials and Yard Maintenance

| Some fire-resistant building materials and considerations include: | |
|--|--|
| Screen over or behind vents with 3mm non-combustible mesh OR install ember-resistant ASTM rated vents. | |
| When the time comes, replace un-rated or old roofing materials with fire-rated roofing materials. Class A roofing material is recommended and includes asphalt shingles, metal, or slate/clay/concrete tile. | |
| Use multi-pane, tempered glass windows, and ensure garage and exterior doors are properly fitted and that weather stripping is maintained to prevent gaps for ember entry. | |
| When the time comes, replace wood and vinyl siding with more fire-resistant options such as brick, metal, fiber cement and treated logs. | |
| Areas of your property that may experience accumulation of flammable debris and vegetation include: | |
| Roof valleys | Under curled shingles |
| On, under and around decks, patios, balconies and porches | In and around loose siding materials |
| Eavestrough/gutters and downspouts | Under raised buildings and trailers without skirting |
| Entryway corners and nooks | |





Volunteers Needed!



Emergency Resource Inventory

We are looking for residents who are willing to volunteer their time, equipment, and or tools during a wildfire event that poses a threat to the Calling Lakes region. Participating volunteers would be asked to submit personal information including name, address, and a list of fire suppression equipment and tools. This may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Water pumps
- Hoses and attachments
- Sprinkler systems
- Generators
- Gas-powered leaf blowers
- Heavy equipment (dozers, tractors with tillage implements)
- Water tenders/water trucks

Residents who are willing to volunteer time and labour would be asked to help prep homes in the path of an oncoming fire front. This may include setting up sprinkler systems, operating pumps, removing fuels adjacent to homes (such as patio furniture, propane tanks, etc) and operating heavy equipment.

Volunteers **will not** be asked to actively fight fire with direct attack methods. Direct attack firefighting requires extensive training and adequate PPE (personal protective equipment). If interested in firefighting, please reach out to the Fort Qu'Appelle Fire Department.

Residents willing to participate are asked to submit their contact information and a list of equipment and materials for an Emergency Register. The Emergency Register will be cached in a manner consistent with Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (LA FOIP) legislation. The Fire Chief or local Administrator will contact volunteers on the register if a wildfire develops in the vicinity of the community, and residents will be requested for support.

The Inventory Register information will be sent to Forsite Consultants to create on a georeferenced map, through a password secure web-based platform. The map will contain pins of marked locations that will identify and inform first responders/administrators of the location, type, and quantity of resources to ensure efficient and effective deployment. Volunteers and equipment within the closest vicinity will be alerted first for quick action, while those who are indirectly involved will be called upon for support. Once created, the information in the inventory register will be managed by your local administrator.

If you are interested in providing volunteer services and/or equipment during a wildfire event in our community, please scan the QR code below and fill out the form. You may be contacted by Forsite Consultants to clarify any of your answers.

Resource Inventory QR Code.

