

Prevent Wildland Fires

The risk of wildfires is high during the warm, dry summer months in Alberta. Forest and prairie wildfires spread at an astonishing rate. In Alberta, according to the Department of Sustainable Resource Development, 40 per cent of all wildfires are caused by human activity and 60 per cent by natural phenomena. These tips can help you protect your home from potential forest and prairie fires.

Site Preparation

- Keep the area within 10 metres of buildings and homes free of flammable vegetation, including shrubs, trees, fences, deadfall or woodpiles. This fuel-free zone provides firefighters with a defensible space to assist in stopping a wildfire spread.
- Vegetation between the 10- and 30-metre defensible zone should include species that are less flammable like Aspen, Birch, Poplar and the Western Larch. Remove or reduce the number of flammable trees such as evergreen, Pine and Spruce.
- Locate burning barrels at least 15 metres from buildings or flammable material. Barrels should be screened to control sparks and always supervised during use.
- Beyond the 30-metre zone, thin or reduce shrubs and small trees that make up the undercover.
- Contact your utility company to clear vegetation within a tree length of overhead power lines.
- Keep vegetation and combustible material away from propane tanks.
- Keep firefighting tools on hand. A shovel, rake, sprinkler, roof top ladder and a hose that will reach the roof are essential.

Home and business construction

- Use fire-resistant roofing materials such as metal, asphalt, and treated shakes to provide resistance from fire.
- Clear your roof and gutters of combustibles, such as overhanging trees, needles and leaves.
- Ensure that exterior walls are made of fire-resistant materials. These include materials such as stucco, brick, metal, and concrete. Wood and vinyl siding provide little protection against fire.
- Keep your home free of fire accumulators. Close in and screen eaves, soffits, decks, and balconies.
- Ensure that your doors and windows are made of fire-resistant materials. Tempered glass provides the best fire protection. However, double or thermal windows will still provide moderate protection.
- Ensure chimneys meet current Alberta Building Code requirements and are screened in with spark arrestors.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/wildfires/default.aspx>