

Guidance Document

If you are part of a local or municipal government or First Nations community and are interested in ensuring that your region is prepared for the wildfire seasons ahead, this document will assist you in forming a Regional FireSmart Committee.

What is FireSmart?

FireSmart is living with and managing for fire on our landscape. Climate change, urban expansion and a host of other mitigating factors have made it likely that we will see more fire seasons like the summers of 2017 and 2018 in the future. FireSmart is our shared responsibility to build wildfire resilient communities that protect life and property from the eventuality of wildfire.

FireSmart emphasizes the utilization of seven disciplines to lessen the effects of wildfire— education, legislation and planning, cross-training, interagency planning, development considerations and emergency planning. These principles have shown that they are effective at reducing the risk related to losses in the most extreme wildfire conditions. Economically, FireSmart is the most cost-effective way to mitigate the loss of homes. At this point in B.C., FireSmart is not utilized by the majority of homeowners that live in fire prone areas. FireSmart BC acknowledges that it is time that the citizens of B.C. accept their role in preparing their homes, neighbourhoods, communities, businesses and province as a whole for wildfire. Together, we can build a FireSmart B.C.

For more information on FireSmart visit www.FireSmartBC.ca

What is the BC FireSmart Committee?

The BC FireSmart™ Committee (BCFSC) was initiated by the BCWS in May 2017 to ensure greater direction and integration of the seven FireSmart disciplines across the province and based on the FireSmart Canada model. The current BCFSC members consist of the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS), Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC), Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), Fire Chiefs' Association of BC (FCABC), Emergency Management BC (EMBC), Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) and First Nations' Emergency Services Society of BC (FNESS). FireSmart Canada sits on the committee in an advisory capacity.

The BCFSC collaboratively maintains and improves the delivery of the BC FireSmart program by ensuring alignment with the seven FireSmart disciplines to better support wildfire preparedness, prevention and mitigation in BC. The committee provides stakeholders and interested parties with one governing agency for FireSmart in BC. Currently the BCFSC is focussed on the development of a BC FireSmart program centred on the seven disciplines of FireSmart. The scope includes evaluating, reviewing and developing procedures, guidelines, best practices and FireSmart program resources and information.

The BCFSC takes the high level actions of the national FireSmart Canada organization and makes them practicable to the Local FireSmart Representatives (LFR), who then provide the same service to the community champions.

What is a Regional FireSmart Committee?

A Regional FireSmart Committee fills a key level of collaboration and organization on the regional level that is currently missing. The FireSmart structure in B.C. needs this coordination in-between the BCFSC and the LFR level. The Regional FireSmart Committees will be the missing link in that structure. The hope for these committees is that they will take the provincial direction and resources that the BCFSC provides and make that information and leadership available to the public in the regions of B.C.

As B.C. is such a varied province in terms of risk, level of involvement, existing governance structures, etc., there is no one set of criteria or format suggested for the Regional FireSmart Committees. The remainder of this document will outline suggestions regarding structure, relationships and activities that will help facilitate the creation and starting phases of a Regional FireSmart Committee. This document is created for local government, First Nations, and those heavily involved in FireSmarting their communities above the single neighbourhood level.

What will the BC FireSmart Committee provide for you?

The BCFSC will provide Regional FireSmart Committees with yearly strategic direction based on the FireSmart Canada yearly business plan and on the BCFSC yearly terms of reference document. This will help the Regional FireSmart Committees determine their FireSmart focus each year. The BCFSC will also provide Regional Committees with password protected access to the BC FireSmart website (www.firesmartbc.ca) which will enable them to access restricted resources, share documents and access the Local FireSmart Representative (LFR) community of practice. The BCFSC will also attempt to participate in the Regional FireSmart Committee meetings where possible and requested in order to provide provincial direction and quarterly updates on FireSmart in the province. The BCFSC will also guarantee that the Regional Committees have access to the FireSmart Provincial Liaisons and their ongoing support.

Suggested activities for Regional FireSmart Committees

Below is a list of suggested activities the Regional FireSmart Committees could take on. Please note that these are suggestions only and it is up to each Regional Committee to determine what FireSmart projects and initiatives would be best for their communities.

- Develop a network of Local FireSmart Representatives in the area and coordinate their activities within the region
- Create an advocacy program for participation in the [FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program](#) and work towards increasing the number of recognized communities in the region each year
- Coordinate applications to the [Community Resiliency Investment](#) program and other funding opportunities, provide direction on where communities can go for more information and/or application assistance
- Direct public to the www.firesmartbc.ca website and upload your FireSmart events and resources to the online FireSmart BC library
- Develop a Terms of Reference document for the Regional Committee based on the template provided by the BCFSC
- Identify FireSmart activities that should be undertaken in regional communities to best build wildfire resiliency in highest risk areas

Suggestions on Regional FireSmart Committee structure

The members of the BCFSC are all agencies that are directly impacted by wildfire and are involved in some aspect of wildfire management. The Chair of the BCFSC rotates between agencies depending on expertise, need and availability. The Regional Committee structure we suggest would follow the same structure. There is no concrete list of agencies that would need to be involved but below are some suggested agencies to start with, of course the structure of each Regional Committee would be dependent on the region and level of FireSmart engagement.

List of suggested agencies:

- Government of B.C. as represented by:
 - o BC Wildfire Service
 - o Emergency Management BC (EMBC)
 - o Regional or district forest staff
- Structural and Volunteer Fire Departments (FCABC)
- Local government/municipality
- First Nations/First Nations' Emergency Services Society of BC (FNESS)
- Community emergency social service organizations
- Active emergency preparation advocacy groups

The frequency and format of meetings would be dependent on the needs and desires of each Regional Committee. The Chair could be rotating, a co-chair position, or even chaired by a committee, again this would be up to the specific Regional Committee.

Next Steps

If you require any assistance or have questions regarding developing a Regional FireSmart Committee in your area, please email info@firesmartbc.ca. Thank you for your interest in the FireSmart program.

Together we can build a FireSmart B.C.

