



The Home Partners Program

Take action on your property to reduce wildfire risks

Overview of the FireSmart Home Partners Program (HPP)

The FireSmart Home Partners Program is a collaboration between FireSmart Canada, FireSmart BC, provincial governments, local governments, Indigenous communities, the private sector and homeowners in Canada. The program's primary purpose is to engage homeowners in voluntary wildfire mitigation activities by offering a professional home assessment with property-specific recommendations. The assessment process accurately evaluates a home and property for wildfire exposure, while engaging the homeowner to discuss their unique fire risk and guidance as to how to reduce it.

Through the HPP, qualified fire departments and wildfire, building, and forestry professionals are trained as Wildfire Mitigation Specialists (WMS). The program is currently only available through local governments (regional districts and municipalities) or First Nations that have been operating a FireSmart program for at least one year. The reason for this is to provide a consistent delivery model and home assessments 'free of charge' to the public by agencies familiar with the tenants and principals of FireSmart.

*Qualification for WMS training is two years of wildfire, structure fire, forestry management, emergency response, a combination of these or other applicable experiences, along with having familiarity of FireSmart best practices to date (acknowledging the free online *FireSmart 101*, *Wildfire Risk Reduction*, or LFR Workshop training).

The HPP Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment

WMS will provide professional, customized wildfire mitigation recommendations, in the form of a qualitative, detailed report to homeowners regarding their individual home and property. WMS should also make themselves available during and after the assessment process for any wildfire mitigation questions or discourse that may follow an assessment and to conduct a follow-up assessment, once all the outlined mitigation actions have been completed.

Property specific data is collected on a mobile device by a WMS during the assessment process. The homeowner will then receive a detailed report outlining recommended action items for their property while highlighting their specific positive wildfire mitigation attributes and actions.

*Collected data and associated records are owned by the property owner and are stored on their behalf by CIFFC (Canadian Interagency Fire Fighting Centre) on a secure server, safeguarded from third-party access or *Freedom of Information Requests (FOIR)* under the *BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*.

When a property owner meets all mitigation criteria, they will receive a "mitigation certificate" confirming that they have met FireSmart best practices on their property. Aside from the peace of mind in taking scientifically proven mitigation actions to protect their home, some insurance companies are now recognizing both these mitigation certificates and completed assessments to offer homeowner insurance incentives. Additionally, real estate enterprises are becoming aware of the program and utilizing home assessments and certificates for purchase promotion and value determinations.



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Background

The FireSmart Home Partners Program organizational structure is streamlined to offer the support and flexibility that is required to function at the local level, while maintaining national consistency in best practice.

The HPP is based on the *REALFire* Program operating in Boulder County, Colorado, which has been incorporated into State land use planning processes, the state building code and is often required for any home insurance eligibility.

In Canada, the program is based on the proven from the United States and the successful operation as a pilot project across seven local authorities in western Canada from 2017-2021. In, 2022 the HPP become available to all jurisdictions across BC and Canada. The program now includes over 80 local governments and First Nations across the province.

Wildfire Mitigation Specialist and other HPP positions:

Provincial HPP Coordinator- Provides support and provincial program direction, materials, training and review to local governments and First Nations through FireSmart Local Program Coordinators Emergency Program Coordinators or other similar positions. In addition, they will coordinate with FireSmart Canada at the national level.

Local Program Coordinators- Coordinate Wildfire Mitigation Specialists, reviews and approves applications and wildfire mitigation reports, schedules assessments and liaises with homeowners and local stakeholders. This individual is typically a local government or First Nation staff member.

Wildfire Mitigation Specialist- A Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (WMS) is a trained fire professional able to provide detailed feedback specific to a structure and the built and natural fuels around it through the HPP Assessment. They conduct the HPP assessments drawing from their knowledge of structure fire, wildfire, forest ecology, home construction, fire ratings, standards and recommend suitable building materials and practices.

Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (WMS) Training

The Wildfire Mitigation Specialist / FireSmart Home Partners Program training, is a 32hr /4-day course provided in person, that takes fire related personnel through an in-depth look at the HPP home ignition zone assessment, the HPP assessment interface and the technical report writing required to produce the assessment reports.

In addition, the course will cover landscaping, building basics, forest ecology, fire behavior, structural vulnerabilities, standards and codes, building material and design, the wildland urban interface (WUI), forest management and resident engagement. During the duration of the course each student will have to complete and compose several HPP assessment reports derived from in-course field assessed homes to receive their WMS designation.

For the purpose of training, we will look to the training facilitator to find six homes to conduct training assessments on. Typically, volunteers can be sourced from fire service members, class participants, eager and engaged community members or use government buildings such as fire halls or public works structures (if need be). A variety of building materials and building design between homes/structures is ideal.

Following completion of the course and training assessment review, participants will be provided a nationally recognizable certificate as a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist signed by the Director of Prevention and Mitigation from FireSmart Canada.



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Frequently Asked Questions:

Is my personal properties information safe? I wouldn't want it falling into the wrong hands.

The server the database is stored on is owned by FireSmart Canada and resides in a secure data warehouse in Canada. FireSmart Canada retains ownership of the intellectual property related to the database and mobile applications. The data and associated records are owned by the property owner and stored on their behalf by FireSmart Canada. It is clear that these records are not owned or in possession of a provincial or municipal entities/agency. Therefore, these records are outside of the definition of a 'record' under most provincial or federal legislation for such things as Freedom of Information Requests (FOIR) that would compel a province or municipality to disclose the record if requested. To this end, it must be clear that although they may have access to the records, Municipal and Provincial governments are NOT in possession of the records and these records remain in possession of FireSmart Canada on behalf of the homeowner.

What is the difference between a HPP Assessment and a Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Scorecard Assessment?

The FireSmart Canada Home Ignition Zone Assessment Score Card is a quantitative assessment form that has been used as an educational tool for many years. Each factor on the assessment form is given a numerical rating for the degree of interface fire hazard contributed by that factor. Cumulative point totals result in an overall HIZ assessment rating. The HIZ Assessment Score Card is a very effective tool for the public to use on their own. It does not allow or account for variability in mitigation options for the structure(s) or their surroundings. Often a considerable barrier encountered when using the FireSmart HIZ Scorecard is the likelihood that a homeowner will receive an extreme rating on an assessment or by the lack of flexibility in mitigation opportunities and become discouraged.

In contrast, the FireSmart Home Partners Program is a qualitative performance-based assessment. It assesses each individual component of the home starting in the Non-combustible Zone and radiating out into zones 1-3 of the HIZ. A total assessment area from the home's foundation out to a 100 meters radius (if applicable) is conducted depending on property boundary size. The assessment process includes the homeowner from start to finish, incorporating education and awareness as part of the mitigation specialists assessment and allows for a wider degree of mitigation options and variability based on the specific needs of a particular home. The report generated identifies vulnerabilities of the structure, adjoining or adjacent structures and both positive and negative attributes in each of the three surrounding 'priority zones'. Lastly, the HPP Assessment provides specific mitigation recommendations, which are trackable and measurable through the secure online reporting system.

I have close neighbours and my Home Ignition Zones overlap with theirs. What can I do?

In a typical neighborhood there are multiple overlapping home ignition zones. The goal of the Home Partners Program is to encourage voluntary homeowner participation to take mitigation action on their own property, where the threat of fire is greatest; immediately adjacent to the home. Our wildfire-based data indicates mitigating the immediate 10m adjacent to a home can effectively reduce a homeowner's potential for wildfire borne structure loss by 90%.

As more individuals adopt the HPP, whole neighborhoods are able to reduce their wildfire risk by employing FireSmart principle in their extended home ignition zones. Working with and encouraging your neighbours to help explain the merits of the HPP and working together to accomplish wildfire mitigation goals will provide the greatest degree of protection at the home, neighbourhood and community scale.



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Why are the Home Ignition Zones the distances they are? What science supports the Home Partners Program?

The Home Ignition Zone distances were not arbitrarily derived. They were initially created from the validation of physical, radiation-driven crown fire experimentation during *the International Crown Fire Modeling Experiment* (ICFME) carried out between 1995 and 2001 in Canada's Northwest Territories. The ICFME involved 18 experimental high-intensity crown fires, with more than 100 participants representing 30 organizations from 14 countries. The experiments provided real fire data in a controlled, high intensity wildfire environment, able to accurately evaluate structure ignition vulnerabilities to both radiant and convective heat. For example, the results of these experiments generated the data required to understand at what distance many building materials both pilot-ignite and self-extinguish during high intensity wildfires.

The ICFME along with numerous wildfire case studies, WUI fire observations and subsequent laboratory experiments have demonstrated both the need and the verification for home ignition zone distances as they are explained today. All of which are explored during the Wildfire Mitigation Specialist training.