

What are Structure Protection Specialists and Crews?

The majority of homes that burn during a wildfire are ignited by embers, not by a wall of flame. In West Kelowna in 2023, embers were blown 2.5km across Okanagan Lake and started multiple new fires on the east side of the lake.

When wildfires threaten communities, the BC Wildfire Service deploys Structure Protection Specialists and crews to help.

Structure protection crews remove flammable vegetation and materials where possible to stop embers from igniting structure fires. They also strategically place sprinklers to create "humidity bubbles" to reduce the chance of embers and burning debris igniting combustible materials on or near a home.



Structure Protection and FireSmart



BC Wildfire Service

Want to learn more? Visit:
[FireSmartBC.ca](https://www.firesmartbc.ca)



Emergency Wildfire Preparedness Checklist



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How do structure protection crews work?

Time is critical in an active fire situation. Structure protection crews must quickly assess what actions and time it will take to defend a property. Choosing the right tactics depends on the fire's behaviour and the property requiring protection.

In many wildfire situations, multiple simultaneous fires caused by embers force firefighters to prioritize which properties to protect.

Non-FireSmart properties – especially those deemed a safety risk – may be prioritized lower than FireSmart properties. This is why it is so important to prepare before a wildfire occurs.

When a home is already FireSmart, firefighters can focus available resources on larger-scale community protection and save more homes.



How can you prepare?

It's crucial to act before a wildfire occurs. FireSmart actions make your home harder to ignite and easier for firefighters to protect.

- Clean gutters and roofs.
- Clear leaves and debris from decks and balconies.
- Keep grass and weeds under 10 cm.
- Store firewood and lumber 10-30 m from structures.
- Move propane tanks 10-30 m away from structures.
- Keep combustible vegetation at least 10 m away from propane tanks.
- Trim trees to achieve a 2 m clearance from the ground.
- Apply these standards to sheds and outbuildings.

A FireSmart home and property requires less equipment and resources to protect than a non-FireSmart home and property.

Why shouldn't you rely on sprinklers?

FireSmart BC does not recommend that residents use their own sprinkler systems to defend against wildfire.

- Using your own sprinklers can lead to uninsurable water damage to your property.
- Preemptively activating your own sprinklers can drain reservoirs and deplete valuable water resources.
- Firefighters will activate sprinkler systems when the time is right.

Completing all FireSmart recommendations drastically increases the likelihood of your home surviving a wildfire.

