



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT INTERFACE FIRES

The current forest fire situation in British Columbia is a reminder to all of us that we need to take precautions to protect our families and property. The first step is to become informed about interface fires, the four stages of evacuation and how to prepare for evacuation. Residents should also take steps to minimize potential risk to their homes.

An interface fire is a wildland fire that puts communities and people at risk. A wind-driven wildland fire, out of control and moving fast, can quickly spread from the forest to threaten your family's safety, home and property.

When a wildland fire threatens a community the Office of the Fire Commissioner, in consultation with the Ministry of Forests, implements four stages of alert:

- **Evacuation alert:** people are warned of imminent threat to life and property, and are asked to be ready to leave on short notice. Be prepared for worsening conditions. This is not a request for immediate evacuation.
- **Evacuation order:** people must leave the area immediately. Residents should register at their designated reception centre.
- **Evacuation rescinded:** residents are advised that they may return to their homes when the danger has passed.
- **All clear:** residents are advised that the danger has passed (residents may not necessarily have been evacuated).

Steps residents should take in preparation for evacuation:

- Locate all family members or co-workers and designate a safe meeting place, should an evacuation be called while separated.
- Gather essential items such as medications, eye glasses, valuable papers (i.e., insurance), immediate care needs for dependants and, if you choose, keepsakes (photographs, etc.). Have these items readily available for quick departure.
- Prepare to move any disabled persons and/or children.
- Move pets and livestock to a safe area.
- **Monitor news sources for information on locations of emergency shelters and evacuation orders.**

To reduce the risk of wildland fire on their property, residents should do the following:

- Clean your gutters and rooftops to ensure they are clear of needles and leaves.
- Remove any flammable materials against or adjacent to your home or outbuildings.
- Prune low-level branches up to at least 2.5 metres above the ground. Replace bark mulch with gravel or decorative rocks.

- It is important to ensure any prunings or other combustible materials are not left to pose a potential threat to buildings.
- Move stacked firewood and lumber at least five metres from any structure. Flammable materials should be at least 10 metres away and uphill from your home.
- Remove standing trees within 10 metres of structure.
- Remove exposed propane tanks and fuel containers.
- If your home is on a slope, pay particular attention to the downhill side of your property. Fire can race uphill and burn trees, brush, grass or other flammable materials.
- Remove branches overhanging the roof.
- Pre-connect garden hoses to the forested portion of your home and place a lawn sprinkler on combustible roofs. Do not turn on water unless the fire is of an immediate threat. Water may be in short supply.
- Have available a round-point shovel and/or grubbing tool to prevent the spread of ground fire.

For further information, visit the Provincial Emergency Program Web site at www.pep.bc.ca for emergency preparedness tips, information on forest fires and links to other emergency services.

For further information on protecting your property, visit the Ministry of Forests Web site at: www.for.gov.bc.ca/protect/safety/.

A copy of the Home Owners FireSmart Manual is available on the Office of the Fire Commissioner's website in a PDF format at <http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/firecom/index.htm>.

A copy of "FireSmart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire" is available in downloadable format at www.partnersinprotection.ab.ca/downloads/.