

MUNICIPAL WILDFIRE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Municipal Wildfire Assistance Program (MWAP) is a province wide program developed by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and the EMA (Emergency Management Alberta) branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs. The program is effective April 1, 2003. It is intended to help reduce both the risk and losses associated with wildfires and is designed to assist municipalities with extraordinary costs for the suppression of wildfires when they occur.

For the purposes of eligibility, the term wildfire includes any unwanted or unplanned wildland fire that burns in forested or grassland areas anywhere in the province of Alberta other than the Forest Protection Area or on federal lands.

The program will not cover costs:

- that could have been reasonably prevented or avoided;
- for which insurance was readily and reasonably available;
- which could likely be recovered through legal action; or
- which could be recovered through other government programs.

A municipality that incurs emergency operations costs directly associated with the suppression of wildfires where those costs exceed \$25 per capita during any provincial fiscal year (April 1 through March 31), will be considered eligible. The official population figures published by Alberta Municipal Affairs in the preceding fiscal year will be used to determine per capita costs.

EMA will reimburse the municipality for 75% of eligible costs that exceed \$25 per capita.

To be eligible, a municipality must contact SRD as early as practicable and use SRD resources if deemed appropriate. The program stipulates that costs billed to the municipality by SRD will be reduced by 75% once the municipality has reached the \$25 per capita amount, either through use of SRD resources or other eligible municipal costs.

In addition, municipalities must demonstrate that they have implemented wildfire prevention initiatives that will be fully operational by April 1, 2008, that show that they have:

- signed Mutual Aid Agreements with neighbouring municipalities, industrial fire departments (where available), and SRD;
- included SRD in its Municipal Emergency Plan;
- implemented a fire permit program according to SRD's Fire Permit Guidelines Manual. The goal of the fire permit program is to ensure that residents and businesses obtain permission from municipal officials before "controlled" burning is allowed;
- implemented a wildfire awareness program (e.g. FireSmart) which encourages residents to take mitigative steps to protect their homes and property from the threat of wildfire;
- ensured that one or more senior personnel from the municipal fire department has taken wildfire management courses approved by the local SRD Wildfire Protection Area manager; and

- implemented a proactive aerial and ground infrared scanning program for detection and subsequent follow-up or actioning.

Once a municipality has determined that it has incurred costs in excess of \$25 per capita, it should contact EMA at (780) 422-9000 (or 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton). An evaluator will contact the municipality to arrange for a review of appropriate municipal records.

A municipality will be expected to keep accurate and detailed financial records on the costs associated with wildfires. Additional information that will be required includes:

- location and legal land description of the fire(s); and
- any investigative reports that may have been completed identifying the cause of the fire.

The following Table provides examples of how the MWAP would be administered using six hypothetical scenarios involving forest fire suppression costs outside the Forest Protection Area:

	Initial Firefighting Costs Paid by Municipality	Firefighting Costs Paid by SRD	Total Firefighting Costs	Municipality Cost (\$25/capita) Population 4,000	Cost paid by AMA	Cost Billed to Municipality by SRD	Final Cost Incurred by Municipality
Scenario 1	\$500,000	\$0.00	\$500,000	\$100,000	\$300,000	\$0.00	\$200,000
Scenario 2	\$0.00	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$100,000	\$0.00	\$175,000	\$175,000
Scenario 3	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$100,000	\$0.00	\$100,000	\$200,000
Scenario 4	\$75,000	\$500,000	\$575,000	\$100,000	\$0.00	\$143,750	\$218,750
Scenario 5	\$200,000	\$500,000	\$700,000	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$125,000	\$250,000
Scenario 6	\$75,000	\$0.00	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$75,000

Scenario 1: Municipal costs of \$500,000 with no assistance from SRD:

- the municipality absorbs \$100,000 (\$25 per capita for 4,000 residents);
- the municipality also absorbs a further \$100,000 (25 per cent of the remaining \$400,000); and
- EMA pays the municipality \$300,000 (75 per cent of costs in excess of \$25 per capita).

Scenario 2: SRD costs of \$400,000 with no assistance from the municipality:

- the municipality will be billed \$100,000 (\$25 per capita for 4,000 residents);
- the municipality will also be billed a further \$75,000 (25 per cent of the remaining \$300,000); and
- SRD absorbs \$225,000.

Scenario 3: Municipal costs of \$100,000 and SRD costs of \$400,000:

- the municipality absorbs \$100,000 (\$25 per capita for 4,000 residents);
- the municipality will be billed \$100,000 (25 percent of SRD's \$400,000 costs); and
- SRD absorbs \$300,000.

Scenario 4: Municipal costs of \$75,000 and SRD costs of \$500,000:

- the municipality absorbs \$75,000 and will be billed another \$25,000 by SRD to fund the per capita requirement (\$25 per capita for 4,000 residents);
- the municipality will also be further billed \$118,750 (25 percent of SRD's remaining costs of \$475,000); and
- SRD absorbs \$356,250.

Scenario 5: Municipal costs of \$200,000 and SRD costs of \$500,000:

- the municipality absorbs \$100,000 (\$25 per capita for 4,000 residents);
- the municipality also absorbs a further \$25,000 (25 per cent of their remaining \$100,000 costs);
- the municipality will be billed \$125,000 by SRD (25 per cent of SRD's \$500,000 costs);
- EMA pays the municipality \$75,000 (75 per cent of the municipality's costs in excess of the \$25. per capita requirement); and
- SRD absorbs \$375,000

Scenario 6: Municipal costs of \$75,000 with no assistance from SRD.

- the municipality absorbs full costs because it did not incur costs in excess of \$25 per capita for 4,000 residents.