

FOR RELEASE #05-163
June 17th, 2005

CLEAN-UP PROGRAM IN PLACE FOR LAST OCTOBER'S WINDSTORMS

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon government, in partnership with the City of Whitehorse, will continue to help clean-up wind-fallen trees and wood debris from last October's windstorms. Wolf Creek, Pineridge, Cowley Creek, Mary Lake, Canyon Crescent and Spruce Hills are the designated subdivisions within the City of Whitehorse affected by the windstorms.

Last October, two exceptionally strong windstorms blew through the Whitehorse region pushing over hundreds of trees in greenbelt areas, public lands and on private properties.

“The exceptionally deep snow last winter hampered clean-up efforts, so we are extending the program with the City of Whitehorse to ensure the affected areas are cleared,” Minister of Community Services Glenn Hart said. “The wind-fallen trees pose a hazard to property-owners and those using the greenbelt areas for recreation so our goal is to make these places safe once again and reduce the potential for fires.”

“The plan we came up with will hopefully encourage residents to clean-up the fallen trees in and around their properties,” said Whitehorse Mayor Ernie Bourassa. “Working with the Yukon government we identified a number of options that will help residents to remove the fallen trees and dispose of the debris safely, effectively and affordably.”

Highlights of the plan include:

- A special FireSmart project with the City of Whitehorse that will focus on removing downed or hazardous trees in greenbelt areas and on public trails;
- Curb-side chipping service for tree tops, limbs, and branches in the designated areas;
- Some relief from the City landfill tipping fees for affected residents hauling waste trees and debris;
- Free personal use firewood permits for the removal of wind-fallen trees on designated public lands, including some greenbelt areas and Commissioner's Land adjacent to private properties;
- Energy, Mines and Resources and the City of Whitehorse have developed a salvage plan for downed timber in designated areas around the city. Permits are available for personal or commercial operators from Energy Mines & Resources Client Services & Inspections, 918 Alaska Highway.
- FireSmart will assist senior citizens and people with special needs to assess the danger posed by hazardous trees on their property. FireSmart will also put these homeowners in touch with professional tree removal contractors who they can hire to help clean-up their properties.

The initiatives were developed by the FireSmart Program in partnership with the Departments of Community Services, Energy, Mines & Resources, Highways & Public Works and the City of Whitehorse.

For information on the services offered, please contact the Yukon's FireSmart Coordinator at 667-3013, or visit the FireSmart website at www.gov.yk.ca

Attachment: Wind Storm Clean-Up Initiatives

Contact:

Doug Caldwell
Policy & Communications
Community Services
Yukon Government
667-8065
doug.caldwell@gov.yk.ca

Dinah Laing
Parks and Recreation
City of Whitehorse
667-8325
laing.dinah@city.whitehorse.yk.ca

Peter Carr
Cabinet Communications
Yukon Government
667-8688
peter.carr@gov.yk.ca

BACKGROUND – WINDSTORM CLEAN-UP INITIATIVES

The Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse are pleased to announce the following initiatives to continue to assist residents affected by the October 2004 windstorms to clean-up greenbelts, open spaces, and private rural properties:

1. On affected private lands:

- FireSmart will assist senior citizens and people in special need to assess the danger posed by hazardous trees on their property. FireSmart will also put these homeowners in touch with professional tree removal contractors who they can hire to help clean-up their properties. For more information, contact the FireSmart Coordinator: 667-3013.
- Some relief from tipping fees for designated areas will be offered in order to assist residents to dispose of wood debris and downed trees due to the windstorm. Please note some restrictions apply.
- The City of Whitehorse is offering a curb-side chipping service to assist private rural homeowners in removing tree tops, limbs and branches.
- The City will assist residents to remove trees that have fallen from adjacent greenbelt areas onto private property, including fences, garages, sheds, or homes.
- For trees that are close to power lines on your property contact Yukon Energy at 393-5300 or the Yukon Electrical Company Ltd. at 633-7000.

2. On affected public lands, including greenbelts and open spaces:

- City of Whitehorse crews will continue work from last year to remove downed trees in greenbelts and open spaces on a priority basis:
 - Fallen or dangerously leaning trees will be the first priority;
 - Opening the City's trail network will be the second priority; and,
 - General clean-up of downed trees will be third priority.

FireSmart and the City are in the process of developing this project in accordance with the FireSmart guidelines. The project will be completed by March 31, 2006.

- The City has approved amendments to its personal use firewood policy that will allow residents to obtain a permit to cut wind fallen trees in designated greenbelt areas of Whitehorse.

Please Note: In order to control and monitor the harvesting of firewood, people must obtain a free permit that will also provide them with directions to designated areas and instructions for disposing of tops and limbs.

Permitting will be restricted to the removal of wind fallen trees on greenbelts adjacent to an owner's property by the owner or their approved designate. Approved designates may be friends, relatives, neighbours, or hired contractors

who have permission from the property owner. NOTE: Alternates must be named on the permit at the time of application.

- Firewood Permits are available in designated areas for residents wanting to remove wind-fallen trees adjacent to their private properties outside of City limits. Please contact Energy, Mines & Resources for more information. Call 456-3877.
- Energy, Mine & Resources and the City have developed a timber salvage plan that will identify commercial opportunities to salvage wind fallen timber or firewood from designated areas in and around the City of Whitehorse.
- FireSmart will work with local First Nations to find ways to assist with the clean up of wind-fallen trees on Settlement Lands in the area of South Whitehorse that were hardest hit by the windstorms and poses the greatest wildfire risk. For example, the area between the Alaska Highway and Mt. Sima Road.

Permitting Information:

Personal Use Firewood Permits

- Firewood permits are available at Energy, Mines & Resources Forestry Building located at Mile 918 on the Alaska Highway. Call 456-3877.

Burning Permits

Burning within the City of Whitehorse is not permitted between March 31 and October 1 and burning permits will not be issued.

Tipping Permits

- To dispose of wind-fallen brush and wood debris from the windstorms at the City's landfill, contact the City of Whitehorse Department for more information. Call 668-8383.
- Residents living outside of City limits may dispose of brush and debris at their local community dump.

Curb-side Chipping Service

- For curb-side chipping services, or to request the removal of trees from greenbelt areas that have come down on your private property, please contact the City's Department of Parks & Recreation. Call 668-8655.

Timber Salvage or Commercial Wood Harvesting Opportunities

- Energy, Mines & Resources Forestry Management Branch continues work to develop a plan to identify timber salvage and commercial wood harvesting opportunities as result of the windstorms. Please contact Energy, Mines and Resources at Forestry Operations for more information. Call 456-3814.

FireSmart Assessments

- FireSmart helps to keep neighbourhoods safer from forest fires. If your property is next to a greenbelt or if your property is heavily vegetated, FireSmart can reduce the threat of fire. Please contact the FireSmart Coordinator for more information. Call 667-3013 or call toll free 1-800-661-0408, ext. 3013.

Please Note:

- Residents should be advised that permits will only be issued for the removal of downed or leaning trees in certain greenbelt areas adjacent to an owner's property and not more than 30 meters back from their property line, unless otherwise designated.
- Permits will not be issued for the removal of healthy, standing trees from any greenbelts.
- Permits will be enforced by City Bylaw and Client and Inspection Services who will do random inspections ensuring that residents adhere to the conditions of the permit.

For more information, please contact:

FireSmart Coordinator
Community Services
Phone: 667-3013
Toll free in communities: 1-800-661-0408, ext 3013

City of Whitehorse
Parks and Recreation
668-8325

Or, visit the FireSmart Website:
<http://www.gov.yk.ca/depts/community/firemanagement/fsprg.html>.