

FIRESMART COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT TEMPLATE



***Note to User:** The text contained in this template is prepared for the use of Local FireSmart Representatives who have commenced the Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Process – the first step for a community seeking FireSmart Community recognition status in the FireSmart Communities Program. The template is intended as a guide to assist Local FireSmart Representatives in preparation of FireSmart Community Assessment Reports.*

1) Introduction

The FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program is designed to provide an effective management approach for preserving wildland living aesthetics while reducing community ignition potential. The program can be tailored for adoption by any community and/or neighborhood association that is committed to ensuring its citizens maximum protection from wildland fire. The following report is intended as a resource to be used by residents of [name of site] for creating a FireSmart Community Plan. The plan developed from this information should be implemented in a collaborative manner, and updated and modified as needed.

[add a second paragraph naming people who assisted with the data-gathering, dates of assessment, etc.].

2) Definition of the Ignition Zone *[use this entire section]*

[name of site] is located in a wildfire environment. Wildfires will happen - exclusion is not a choice. The variables in a wildfire scenario are when the fire will occur, and where. This assessment addresses the wildfire-related characteristics of [name of site]. It examines the area's exposure to wildfire as it relates to ignition potential. The assessment does not focus on specific homes, but examines the community as a whole.

A house burns because of its relationship with everything in its surrounding ignition zone - the house and its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, a homeowner must eliminate the wildfire's potential relationship with his/her house. This can be accomplished by interrupting the natural path a fire takes. Changing a fire's path by clearing the ignition zone is an easy-to-accomplish task that can prevent home loss. To accomplish this, flammable items such as excessive vegetation must be removed from the area immediately around the structure to prevent flames from contacting it. Also, reducing the volume of live vegetation will affect the intensity of the wildfire as it nears the home.

Included in this assessment are observations made while visiting [name of site]. The assessment addresses the ease with which home ignitions can occur under severe wildfire conditions and how these ignitions might be avoided within the ignition zones of affected residents. [name of site] residents can reduce the risk of structure loss during a wildfire by taking actions within their ignition zones. This zone principally determines the potential for home ignitions during a wildland fire; it includes a house and its immediate surroundings within 100 metres. Given the extent of this zone, the ignition zones of several homes sometimes overlap, and often spill over onto adjacent public or community land.

The results of the assessment show (under current conditions) that wildfire behavior and subsequent losses will be dominated by the residential characteristics of this area. The good news is that residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss by addressing community vulnerabilities. Relatively small investments of time and effort will reap great rewards in wildfire safety.

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3) Description of [*Size and Nature of*] the Severe Case Wildland Fire Characteristics that Could Threaten the Area

Fire intensity and spread rate depend on the fuel type and fuel conditions, the weather conditions prior and during ignition, and the topography. Generally the following relationships hold between the fire behavior and the fuel, weather and topography.

- Fine fuels ignite more easily and spread fire faster with higher intensities than coarser fuels. For a given fuel, the more there is and the more continuous it is, the faster the fire spreads and the higher the intensities. Fine fuels take a shorter time to burn out than coarser fuels.
- The weather conditions affect the moisture content of the dead and live vegetative fuels. Dead fine fuel moisture content is highly dependent on the relative humidity and the degree of sun exposure. The lower the relative humidity and the greater the sun exposure, the lower will be the fuel moisture content. Lower fuel moistures produce higher spread rates and fire intensities.
- Wind speed significantly influences the rate of fire spread and fire intensity. The higher the wind, the greater the spread rate, intensity, and ember transport distances.
- Topography influences fire behavior principally by the steepness of the slope. However, the configuration of the terrain such as narrow draws, saddles and so forth can influence fire spread and intensity. In general, the steeper the slope, the higher the uphill fire spread and intensity.

[Add description of an anticipated local wildfire event here, based on existing fuel, topography and weather conditions.]

4) Site Description

[No boilerplate. Include community size and age, home density, burning characteristics of bordering public lands (if any), vegetation types and condition within the community perimeter inclusive of any “natural” islands or reserves with untreated vegetation, topography and any other pertinent information from your notes.]

5) Assessment Process

[No boilerplate. Describe your methods and what occurred in the data-gathering phase in one short paragraph. See the 3-phased approach in Section 5.3 of the User Reference Guide.]

6) Observations and Issues

[No boilerplate. Itemize observations made during data-gathering phase. Explain and support them with photographs. The Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Process provides a logical outline for these observations. Highlight the top three or four issues that you have identified within the community. Append the Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Form to this report.]

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7) Recommendations

The FireSmart Canada Community Recognition Program seeks to create a sustainable balance that will allow communities to live safely while maintaining environmental harmony in a wildland urban interface (WUI) setting. Homeowners already balance their decisions about fire protection measures against their desire for certain flammable components on their properties. It is important for them to understand the implications of the choices they are making. These choices directly relate to the ignitability of their home ignition zones during a wildfire.

A homeowner/community must focus attention on the home and surrounding area and eliminate the fire's potential relationship with the house. This can be accomplished by disconnecting the house from high and/or low-intensity fire that could occur around it, and by being conscious of the devastating effects of wind-driven embers. The following photographs were taken in *[name of site]* and are examples of good FireSmart practices.

The following section of this report provides recommendations for consideration by the FireSmart Board concerning wildfire safety issues that were identified as priorities in the community of *[name here]* during the assessment. *[insert bulleted paragraphs here to highlight minor and major issues]*

8) Successful FireSmart Mitigations

When adequately prepared, a house can likely withstand a wildfire without the intervention of the fire service. Further, a house and its surrounding community can be both FireSmart and compatible with the area's ecosystem. The FireSmart Communities Program is designed to enable communities to achieve a high level of protection against wildfire loss even as a sustainable ecosystem balance is maintained.

[Document this section with good examples that are explained and supported with photographs and captions].

9) Next Steps

After reviewing the contents of this assessment and its recommendations, the *[name of site]* FireSmart Board in consultation with its advisors will determine whether or not it wishes to continue seeking FireSmart Community recognition status. The Local FireSmart Representative will contact the FireSmart Board representative by *[date]* to receive its decision.

If the report and recommendations are accepted and recognition will be sought, the *[name of site]* FireSmart Board will create agreed-upon, area-specific solutions to the FireSmart Community Assessment Report recommendations and prepare a FireSmart Community Plan in cooperation with their Local FireSmart Representative and local fire agency personnel who may be acting as advisors.

Assuming *[name of community]* seeks to achieve national recognition as a FireSmart Community, it will integrate the following standards into its FireSmart Community Plan:

- Sponsor a local FireSmart Board that maintains the FireSmart Community program and recognition status.
- Continue to work with the Local FireSmart Representative or enlist the assistance of a WUI specialist to complete a FireSmart Community Plan which identifies agreed-upon, achievable local solutions.
- Invest a minimum of \$2.00 annually per capita in its local FireSmart Events and activities (work done by municipal employees or volunteers, using municipal or other equipment, can be included, as can provincial/territorial grants dedicated to that purpose).

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- Hold a FireSmart Event (e.g. FireSmart Day) each year that is dedicated to a local FireSmart project.
- Submit an application form or annual renewal application form with supporting information to FireSmart Canada. This application or renewal process documents continuing participation in the FireSmart Communities Program with respect to the above criteria.

10) Signature of Local FireSmart Representative

[Name and signature of LFR, agency affiliation and contact information, date of report completion.]

11) Appendix 1

[Completed Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Form to be attached here.]

[Optional text: For use as applicable within the report.]

[name of site] residents are reminded to be conscious of keeping high-intensity fire more than 30 metres from their homes. It is important for them to avoid fire contact with their structures. This includes firebrands. The assessment team recommends the establishment of a 'fire free zone', allowing no fire to burn within three metres of a house by removing fuels located there. It is a bad idea for fire to touch a house during a wildfire. Remember that, while wildfire cannot be eliminated from a property, it can be reduced in intensity.

Homeowners are reminded that street signs, addresses, road widths and fire hydrants do not keep a house from igniting. Proper attention to their home ignition zones - does. They should identify the things that will ignite their homes and address those as priorities.

Weather is of great concern during wildfire season. When fire weather is severe, or the home is unoccupied, homeowners should remember not to leave flammable items outside. This includes rattan doormats, flammable patio furniture, and firewood stacked next to the house.