

Heartland 101: Preventing and Reducing Risk from Wildfires

October 2015

Nearly half a million hectares in the province have been impacted by 1,705 fires so far this year. This makes 2015 one of Alberta's worst wildfire seasons in the last five years.

Regionally since 2010, hundreds of wildfires with varying levels of severity have been responded to in Lamont, Strathcona and Sturgeon counties. Mutual aid and the ability to call on resources and assistance from local municipalities and industry enable responders to minimize wildfire impact to people and property.

At Industry

Fire is a hazard identified in all local industry response plans. To prevent and reduce risk of damage to assets from wildfire, industries take the following actions:

- utilize vegetation management programs
- identify potential fuel sources and mitigation plans
- routinely test fire water systems and emergency response plans

On October 21st, an emergency exercise will take place in Sturgeon County. The scenario will call for activation of the response plans of industry, the municipality and Northeast Region Community Awareness Emergency Response (NRCAER) mutual aid. Exercises are an effective way for responders to work together and confirm response plans *prior* to an incident.

At Home

Residents and property owners can help prevent or reduce risk of damage from wildfires. This fall, take a look around your property and consider the following "Firesmart" tips:

1. Surround your home with a 10-metre defensible space. Clear away trees, brush, and firewood that could add fuel to a fire. Use driveways, lawns, gravel and landscaping options such as more fire-resilient trees to create a fuel break wherever possible.
2. Do not store gas/propane tanks under decks or porches.
3. Assess your roof. Clear away overhanging trees and combustible debris such as pine needles and other vegetation that could act as fuel for airborne sparks and embers. Keep all eaves troughs clear of dry material. If a roof is scheduled for replacement, consider installing more fire resilient roofing material, such as asphalt or ceramic.
4. Be visible in an emergency. Ensure emergency crews can see the address clearly from the road. Be a community advocate for visible, fireproof street signs.
5. Be "Firesmart" inside the home. Keep one or more fire extinguishers charged and easily accessible. Install smoke detectors inside each bedroom and outside every sleeping area, as well as on every floor of your home.
6. Develop a fire safety plan which includes a home fire drill, and be ready at all times to put the plan into action.

For more fire prevention and preparedness information, visit www.firesmartcanada.ca.

Stay up to date on industrial activity in the Heartland by visiting lifeintheheartland.com or following us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

*Heartland 101 is a monthly print and on-air (Mix 107.9 FM) series brought to you by **Life in the Heartland**, a partnership of five local organizations improving access to information, resources, and contacts for communities in and around Alberta's Industrial Heartland.*