

Wildfire Resilience in Action: Practical Strategies for Prevention, Response & Recovery

Wildfire resilience is not a single action—it is a coordinated system of preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery. Local governments play a central role in aligning these efforts to enable long-term resilience.

What Local Governments Can Do

1. Engage in FireSmart Activities

Communities that treat FireSmart as an ongoing program are better positioned to reduce risk before an event and recover more effectively after wildfire impacts. This requires a coordinated approach that integrates planning, operations and community engagement.

Practical actions local governments can take:

- Establish a formal FireSmart program supported by a Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan (CWRP) and a designated lead to ensure coordination and accountability.
- Identify and prioritize risk by mapping high-risk areas, including the wildland–urban interface and critical infrastructure.
- Lead by example by applying FireSmart principles to local government facilities, infrastructure, and public lands through fuel management and maintenance practices.
- Engage the community through education, home assessments, and neighbourhood-level initiatives to support long-term behaviour change.
- Leverage available funding and integrate into financial planning by utilizing FireSmart funding streams to support mitigation activities, while embedding wildfire risk reduction into annual budgets and long-term planning.

Communities that embed FireSmart into ongoing operations—rather than treating it as a one-time initiative—are better equipped to reduce risk and recover more effectively.

2. Strengthen Response Readiness

Effective wildfire response depends on having the right support, tools, policies and processes in place to enable timely decision-making and coordinated action during rapidly evolving events.

Practical actions local governments can take:

- Establish clear internal processes for decision-making, communication, and operational coordination during wildfire events.
- Model fire response times and establish a core policy for fire response to limit liability exposure.
- Plan for emergency operations and support services by identifying and coordinating independent contractors that may be needed to support local government EOC operations in advance.
- Understand your own insurance coverage to support decisions related to the use of temporary space, volunteers and independent contractors and service providers during emergency operations. This also includes understanding assets you insure, how your coverage responds to wildfire losses and how your policies can support recovery and inform future wildfire resilience efforts after a loss occurs.
- Leverage MIABC support by using available wildfire checklists and Response Ready services—including contract reviews, the Casual Legal Advice Program, business continuity toolkits and EOC risk management advice—to support preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery before, during, and after wildfire events.

When you strengthen response readiness, you are better equipped to make timely decisions, coordinate effectively and manage risk.

3. Enable Effective Use of Third-Party Resources

Third-Party Resources (TPRs) provide specialized wildfire mitigation and response support. Strong relationships with TPRs, combined with clear authority, processes, and access pathways established in advance, create the conditions for coordinated response, timely deployment, and enhanced community trust.

Practical actions local governments can take:

- Establish clear authority and access procedures by developing TPR-specific policies and operational procedures that reinforce the local authority's role as Authority Having Jurisdiction and define when and how access to evacuation order areas is granted.
- Discuss TPR integration with your local BC Wildfire Service fire centre to determine how TPRs will integrate into Incident Action Plans and on-the-ground operations.
- Build relationships in advance by engaging with providers such as Wildfire Defence Systems Canada and other TPRs to support timely activation and effective deployment when wildfire events occur.

When processes and relationships are in place, Third-Party Resources can be deployed quickly, helping reduce wildfire impacts and better protect your community.

4. Establish Wildfire Development Permit Areas

Wildfire Development Permit Areas are a key land use and planning tool to mitigate the impact of wildfires—particularly where local government authority over building standards is limited by provincial legislation.

Practical actions local governments can take:

- Create Wildfire Development Permit Areas (DPAs) within Official Community Plans or zoning bylaws to guide safer development and rebuild in wildfire prone areas.
- Align DPA requirements with FireSmart standards by requiring fire-resistant materials and the creation of defensible space during design.
- Use DPAs to support “build back better” outcomes following wildfire events to avoid re-establishing wildfire risk conditions.

Establishing DPAs help embed wildfire risk reduction into long-term land use decisions rather than relying solely on voluntary measures of others.

Links to Supporting Resources

[FireSmart BC](#)

[FireSmart Community Funding and Supports](#)

[*Emergency and Disaster Management Act*](#)

[*Interim Standard Operating Guideline for Third Party Wildfire Resources in the Province of British Columbia, Canada*](#)

[Managing Temporary Access to Areas under Evacuation Order: A Guide for Local Authorities](#)

[Wildfire Defence Systems Canada: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

MIABC Members-Only Resources (login required)

[Response Ready](#)

[MIABC Wildfire Development Permit Area \(DPA\) Model Bylaw](#)

[MIABC Wildfire Checklists](#)

[Business Continuity Resource Hub](#)