

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

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Dan Séguin, Acting General Manager, Fire & Emergency Management Services, Regional District of Central Kootenay

Don Lidstone, Senior Partner, Lidstone & Company

Euan Rafferty, Vice President, Insurance, BCAA

Marina Sen, Manager of Member Engagement, MIABC

Thomas Cook, Vice President, Professional Services, Wildfire Defence Systems Canada

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# Setting the Scene



## Local Governments

Coordinate emergency response and manages areas under evacuation order



## Third Party Resources

Deliver time-critical wildfire intervention activities



WILDFIRE DEFENCE SYSTEMS CANADA INC.

## Insurance Providers

Enable proactive response and strengthen community resilience



BCAA



MUNICIPAL INSURANCE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Local Government Partners

Equip communities with tools and resources to protect lives, reduce loss and manage risk

LIDSTONE & COMPANY





# Wildfire in Canada: The Risk Picture

## Risk Drivers:

- Hotter, drier seasons and longer fire years
- Lightning and human-caused fires near the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)
- Fuel build-up and wind-driven spread

Wildfire is now a Canada-wide peril, not just a western issue.

# On the Front Lines:

## 2024 Wildfire Season — Regional District of Central Kootenay



On the evening of July 17, 2024, at the height of summer's heat and drought, a lightning storm swept through the Central Kootenay region, igniting 98 wildfires...

25 Evacuation Alerts issued

14 Evacuation Orders issued

33,990 total hectares burnt\*

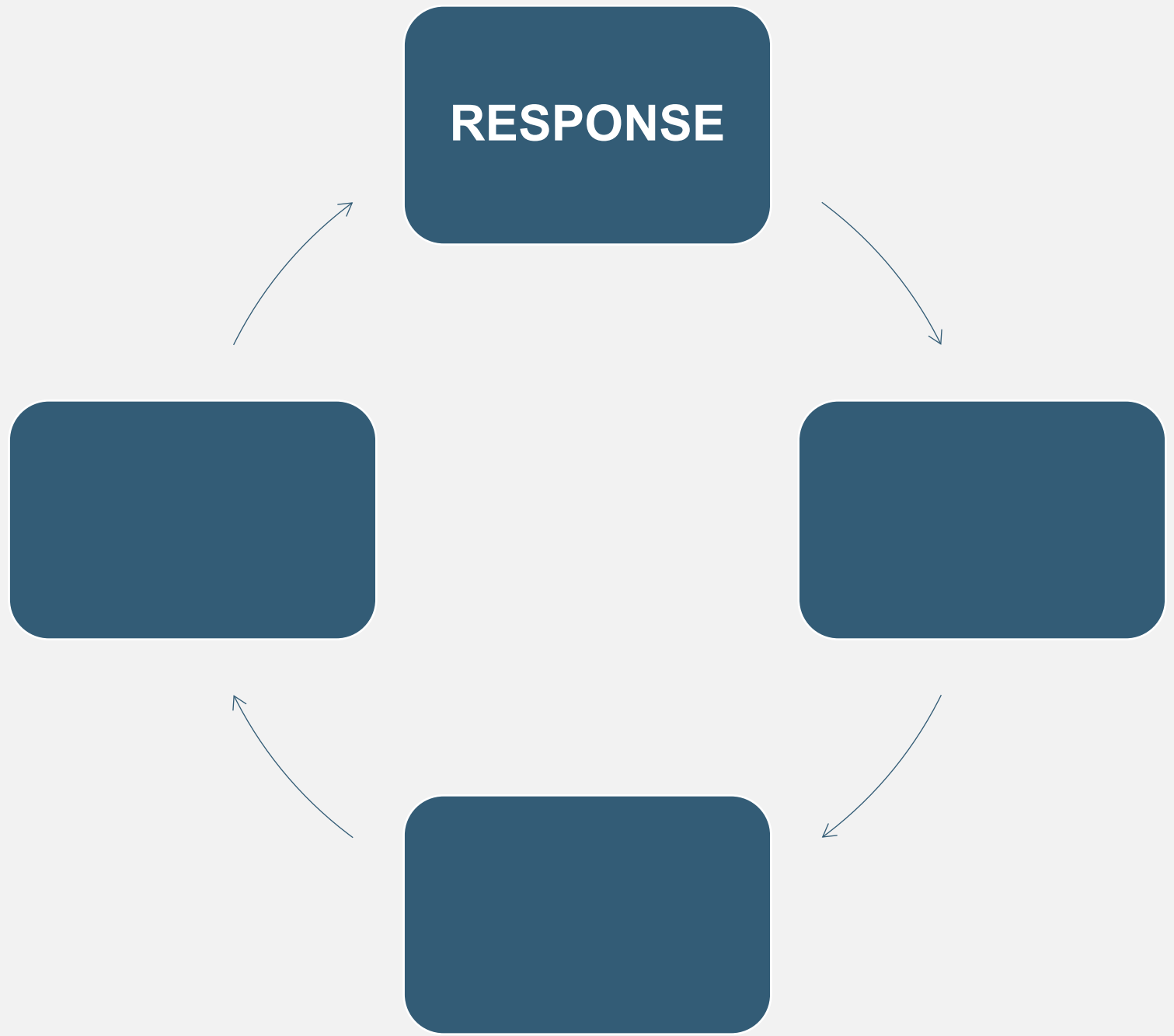
\*Wildfires within and spanning the RDCK jurisdictional boundary listed in this report.

2,113 properties received  
an Evacuation Alert and/or Order

5,282 individuals impacted\*

\*Estimated population figures for direct impact,  
using an average population density (not including visitor numbers.)

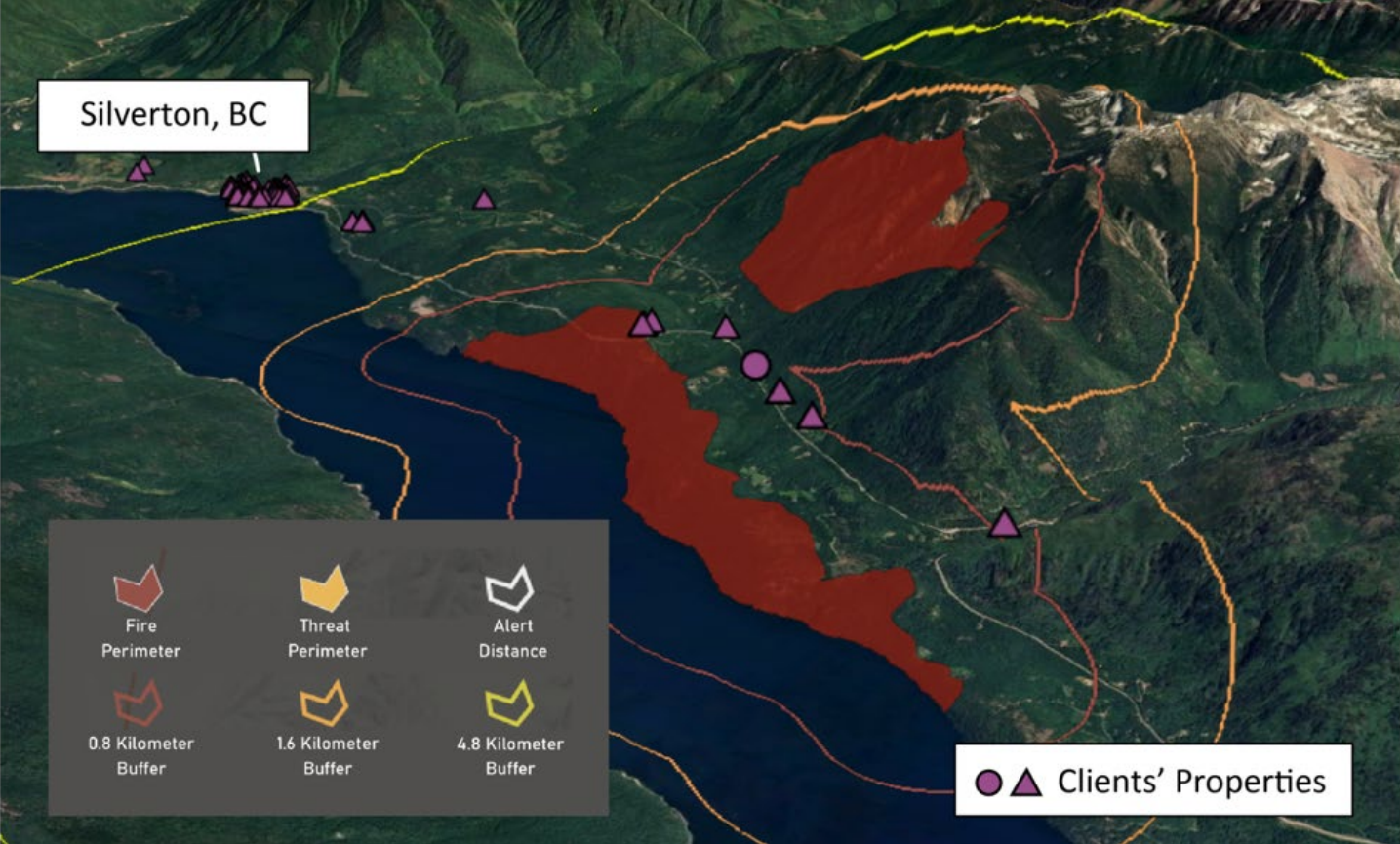
Data Sources: RDCK, BCWS, Stats Canada





# Third Party Resources (TPR)

# Alwin Creek Complex



July 2024, Silverton, BC

# What is a TPR?

**Wildfire-related services provided by entities not part of Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)**

Examples: resources, hand crews, officers, and/or personnel working for an insurance company or other entity

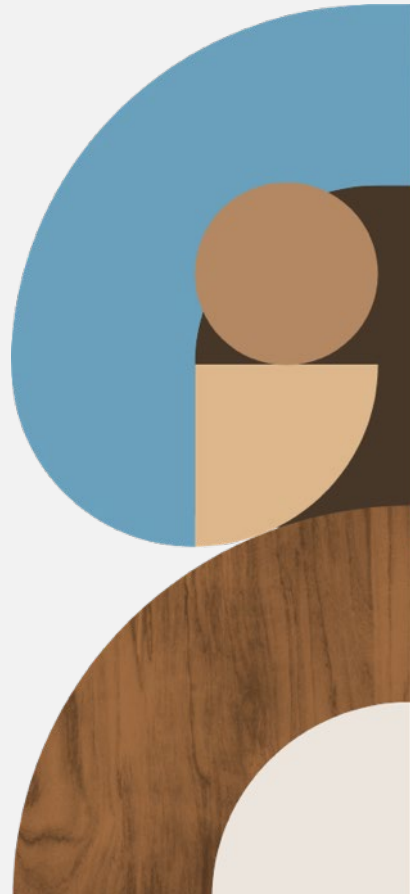


**WILDFIRE DEFENCE  
SYSTEMS CANADA INC.**



# Wildfire Defence Systems Canada

- 1 Time-critical wildfire loss intervention activities
- 2 Insurance industry funded
- 3 Supplemental to actions of property owners and emergency services – does not replace FireSmart practices!





# Coordination

# Operational Challenges & Delays

1

Understanding the  
role of TPRs & WDS  
Canada

2

Assessing the risk

3

Integration with BC  
Wildfire Services

4

EOC Policy Group



# 5 Legislative Complexities







**BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
**FireSmart™**



# **The FireSmart Community Funding and Supports program**



# Funding Available

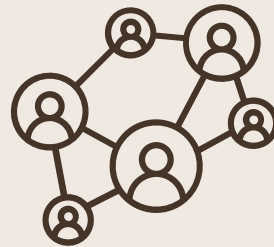
- Program is funded by the Province of BC and administered by UBCM
- \$200,000/year for high wildfire risk communities (Risk Class 1–3)
- \$150,000/year for lower risk communities (Risk Class 4–5)
- An additional \$50,000/year per Electoral Area for Regional Districts
- An additional \$100,000/year for eligible fuel management activities within First Nation land or publicly owned land



# To qualify, applicants must:



Hire or designate a  
FireSmart position



Participate in a Community  
FireSmart and Resiliency  
Collaborative



Develop or update a  
Community Wildfire  
Resiliency Plan (CWRP)

# Eligible Activities

- FireSmart coordinators or local positions
- Public education and outreach
- Planning and development integration
- Interagency training and collaboration



# Eligible Activities

- Emergency preparedness initiatives
- FireSmart activities for homes and properties (assessments and rebates)
- Wildfire risk reduction for critical infrastructure and community assets





# Wildfire Development Permit Area Bylaw

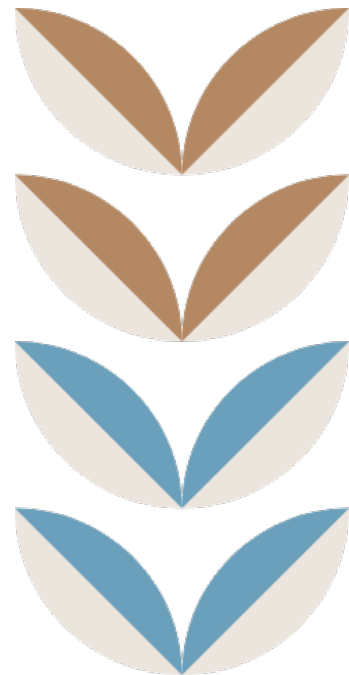
# Wildfire DPA Bylaws

- British Columbia Building Code, based on National Building Code, does **not** contain fire standards sufficient to address wildfire threats to communities
- Local governments prohibited under section 5 of the *Building Act* from imposing new standards/requirements in building bylaws that are not in BC Building Code



# Wildfire DPA Bylaws

- Local governments may create development permit areas (DPAs) under official community plans (OCPs) to impose wildfire standards
- Some limited authority for requirements or standards in building bylaw despite *Building Act*



# OCPs may...

1

Describe the development permit area

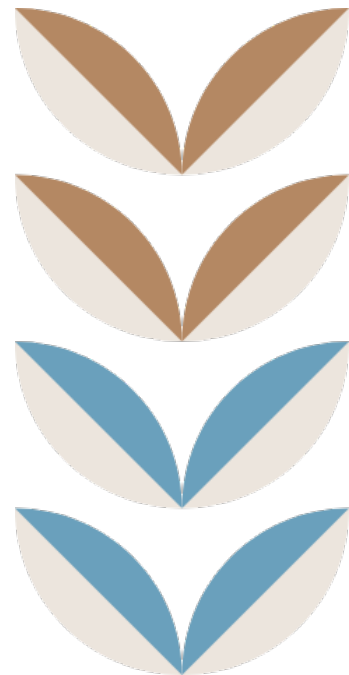
2

Establish the specific class of development permit



# Relevant classes under s. 488(1) *Local Government Act:*

- protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity
- protection of development from hazardous conditions
- form and character of intensive residential development
- form and character of commercial, industrial or multi-family development
- form and character of development in the resort region
- objectives to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions



# Considerations

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OCP must describe special conditions to justify DPA designation and specify guidelines how special conditions are addressed

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Zoning bylaw may also specify guidelines, but not designation of the DPA area or special conditions

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OCP or zoning may specify conditions under which development permit not required

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Guidelines must comply strictly with authority in s. 490 and 491 *Local Government Act*



# Wildfire DPA Effectiveness



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**DPA guidelines in municipal OCP  
or any local government zoning  
bylaw enforced by injunction  
(s. 274 *Community Charter*)**

# Wildfire DPA Effectiveness

Importantly,

- land cannot be subdivided,
- construction cannot be started,
- designated natural or hazardous areas cannot be altered,

unless owner first obtains applicable development permit

Statutory covenant can also help enforce a development permit



# Wildfire DPA Effectiveness

- Development permits cannot be enforced by municipal ticket information or bylaw adjudication notices
- In some cases, municipal council may proceed by remedial action requirements in relation to hazardous conditions or declared nuisances that are also in contravention of development permits
- Some DPA conditions can be subject to requirements for security, which can be used to enforce the development permits



# How To Adopt Effective DPA Bylaws (OCP)

## Designation of DPA area:

- Amendment or enactment of OCP to define the area and class of DP under section 488(1) LGA
- Requires consultation under section 475 LGA, bylaw under section 472 and 477, public hearing under section 477(3)(c), valid hearing notices

Describe special conditions in OCP to justify designation

Specify guidelines respecting manner special conditions to be addressed, in OCP or zoning bylaw



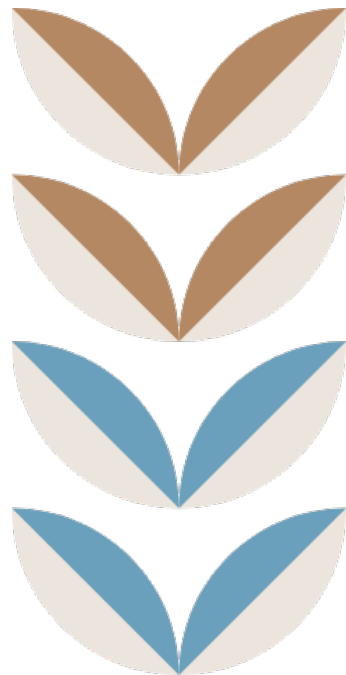
# How To Adopt Effective DPA Bylaws (Zoning)

Although DP area and special conditions are in OCP, guidelines and exemptions may be included instead in zoning bylaw

OCP enactment requires public hearing, subject to valid notices and procedures

For guidelines and exemptions in zoning bylaw, hearing can be waived, which requires waived hearing notice

Provide online and "counter" assistance with templates, procedures and checklists and spell out process in statutory development procedures bylaw



# Validity of DPs

- In the case of both OCP and zoning processes, guidelines must be authorized under ss. 488, 490 and 491 of the *Local Government Act*
- DP must not contain requirements or standards that are inconsistent with guidelines or
- DP must not alter density or use
- DP applicant entitled as of right to issuance of DP, with no discretion, if application is consistent with guidelines and application procedures/fees
- Issuance of DP can be delegated to municipal official, s. 154 *Community Charter*



# DPA Guidelines

- Align DPA guidelines with FireSmart BC language
- Use clear and accessible language for detailed specific requirements and standards
- Do not include any private law duties of care
- Separate building management from vegetation management
- Require statutory covenants to help enforce the DPs



# DPA Guidelines

Best practices – see FireSmart BC DPA Guidelines (buildings):

Roof material

Gutter material

Building siding

Deck/porch

Windows

Vents

Eaves

Fencing

Separation

Unenclosed  
spaces



# DPA Guidelines

- DPAs can be established along with building bylaw amendments
- Wildfire interface related matters in some cases “unrestricted” for purposes of *Building Act*, so local government may consider wildfire standards (Codes Canada) and NFPA standards
- Step Code offers some exemptions from *Building Act* restrictions
- Local variation process more likely to succeed if several local governments apply together



# DPA Guidelines

- Best practices – see FireSmart BC DPA Guidelines (vegetation):
  - 1.5m non-combustible surface, no flammable vegetation
  - Coniferous trees beyond 1.5m if limbed up to 2m
  - Non-combustible cladding if facing trees
  - Coniferous trees beyond 10m if pruned to 2m and crown spacing > 3m
- Spacing and slope setback – address following:
  - Outbuildings
  - Juniper and cedar hedges
  - Bark mulch



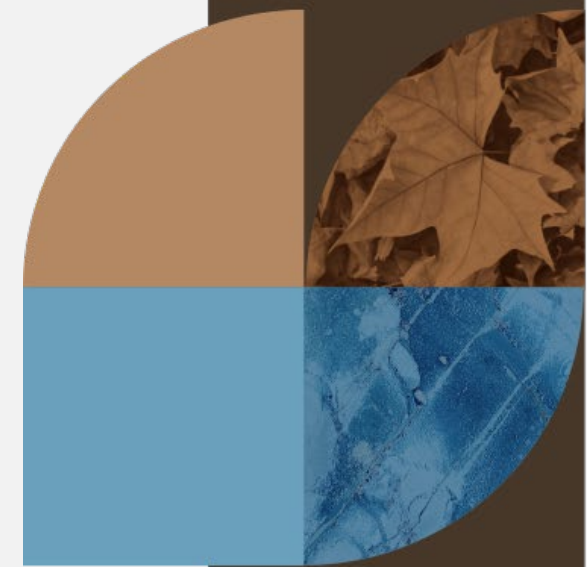




# The role of insurance in helping communities becoming more resilient

The logo for the British Columbia Association of Municipalities (BCAA) consists of the letters "BCAA" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters are centered within a solid blue rectangular background. This blue rectangle is itself centered within a white rectangular border.

**BCAA**

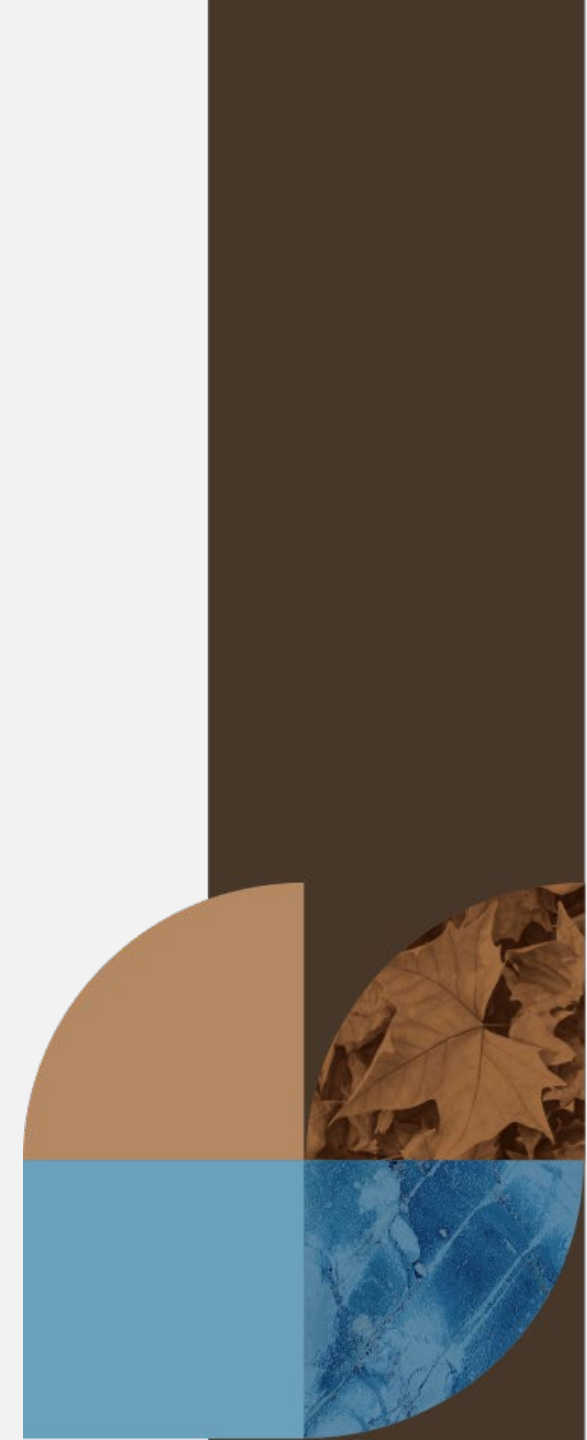


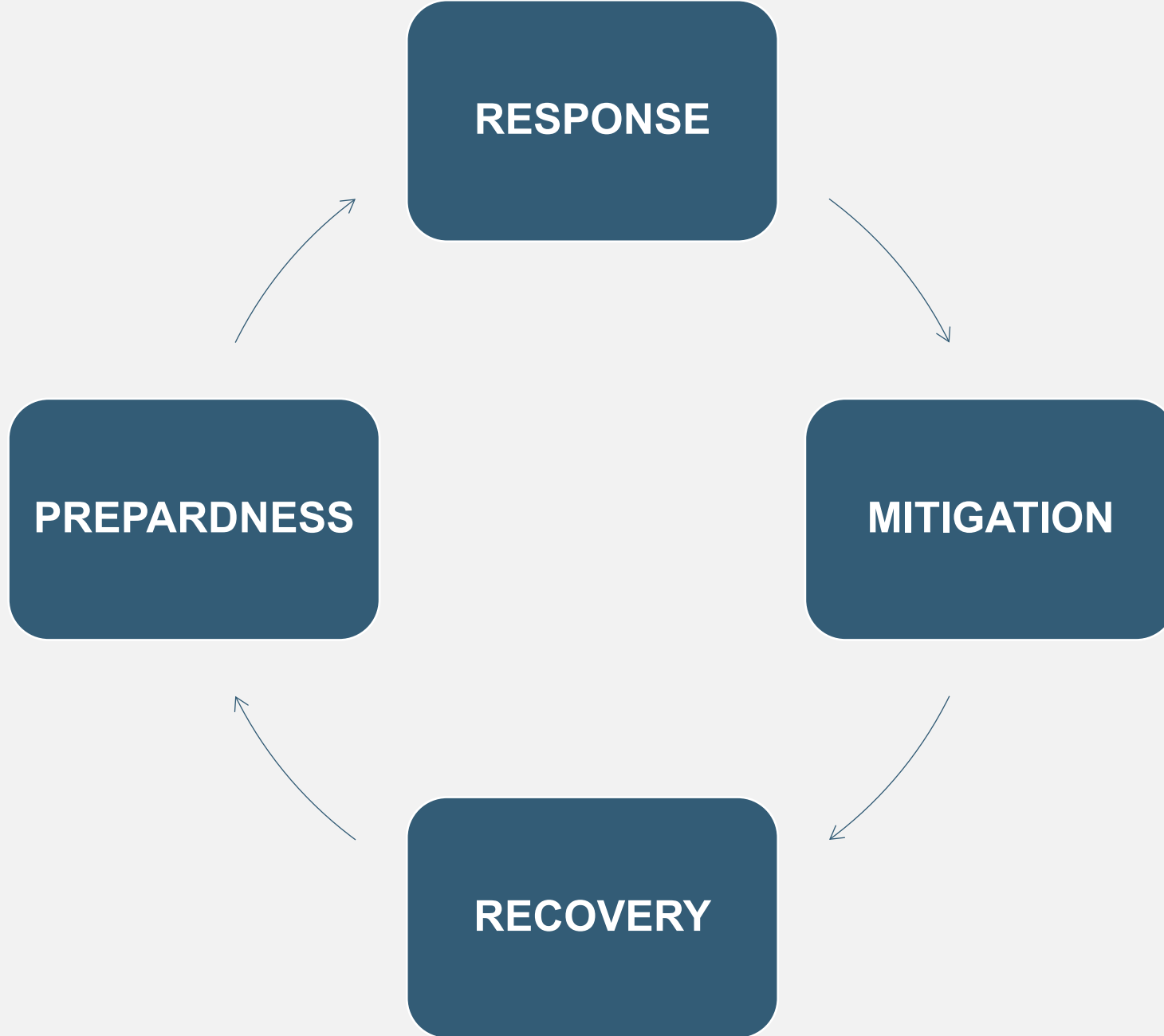


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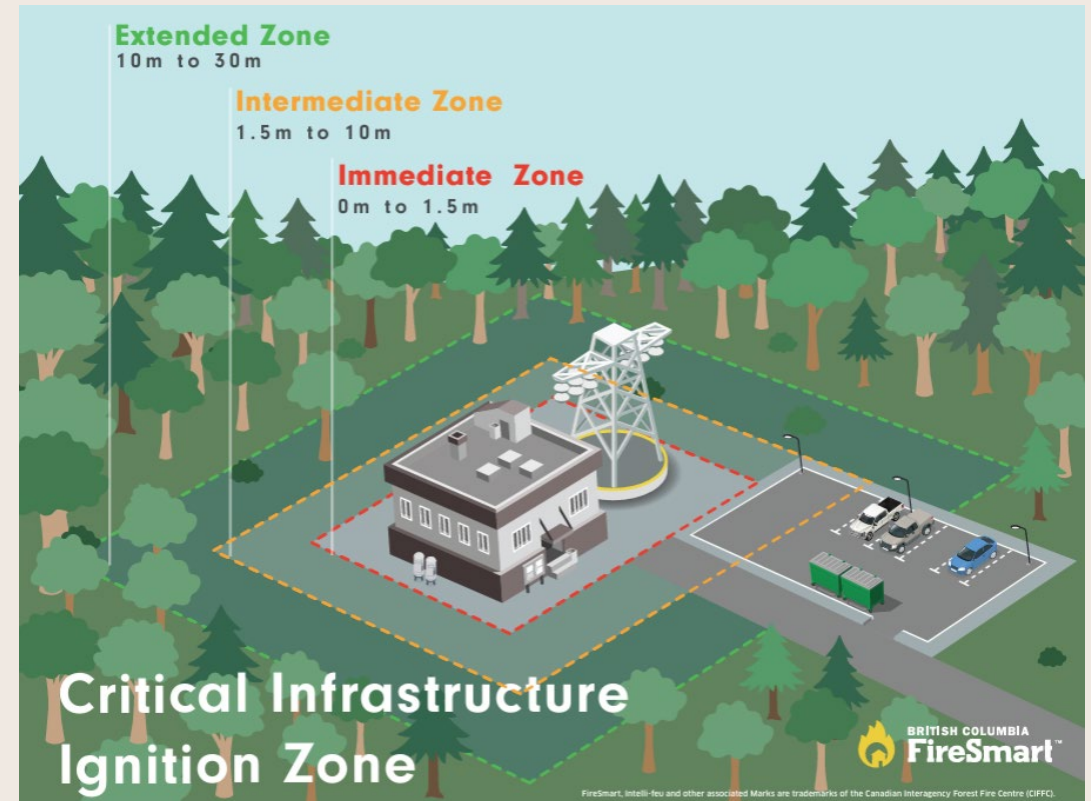
# What can local governments do to strengthen their wildfire resiliency?



# 1

# Engage in FireSmart Activities

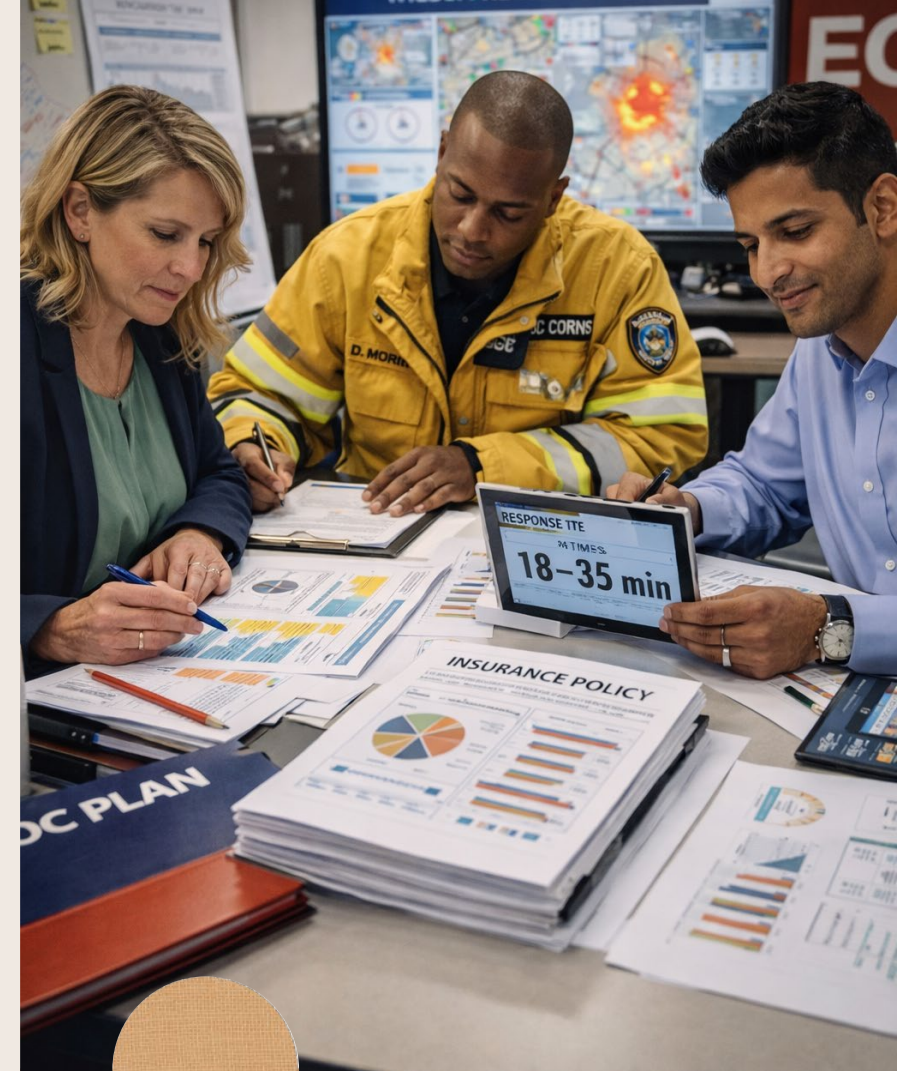
Communities that embed FireSmart into ongoing operations are better equipped to reduce risk and recover more effectively.



## 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.





### 3

## Enable Effective Use of Third-Party Resources

Strong relationships with TPRs, combined with clear authority, processes, and access pathways established in advance, create the conditions for effective, coordinated response, timely deployment and enhanced community trust.

# 4

## Establish Wildfire Development Permit Areas

Wildfire Development Permit Areas (DPAs) 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.



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Questions?