

Community Wildfire Preparedness Basics: Building A Foundation for Success



What is wildfire resilience?

A Definition of Wildfire Resilience

The ability of people, communities, and businesses to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from wildfire events.

In short: if you are wildfire resilient, you are prepared to live alongside wildfire

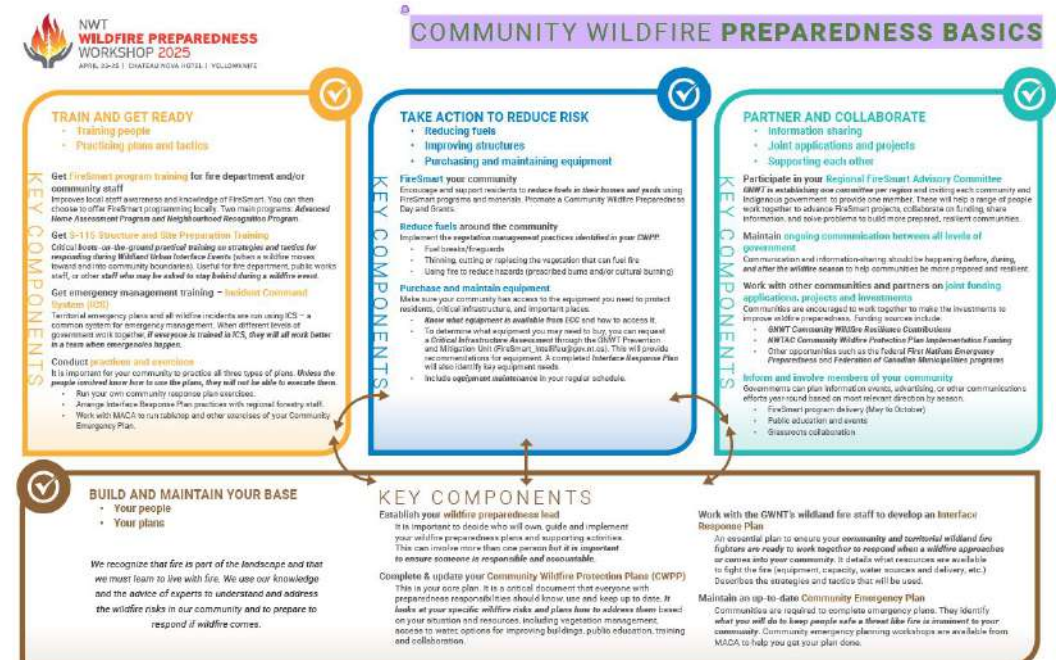
What is wildfire preparedness?

The way I look at it...

*The stuff we do every day, every month, and every year to
become more wildfire resilient*

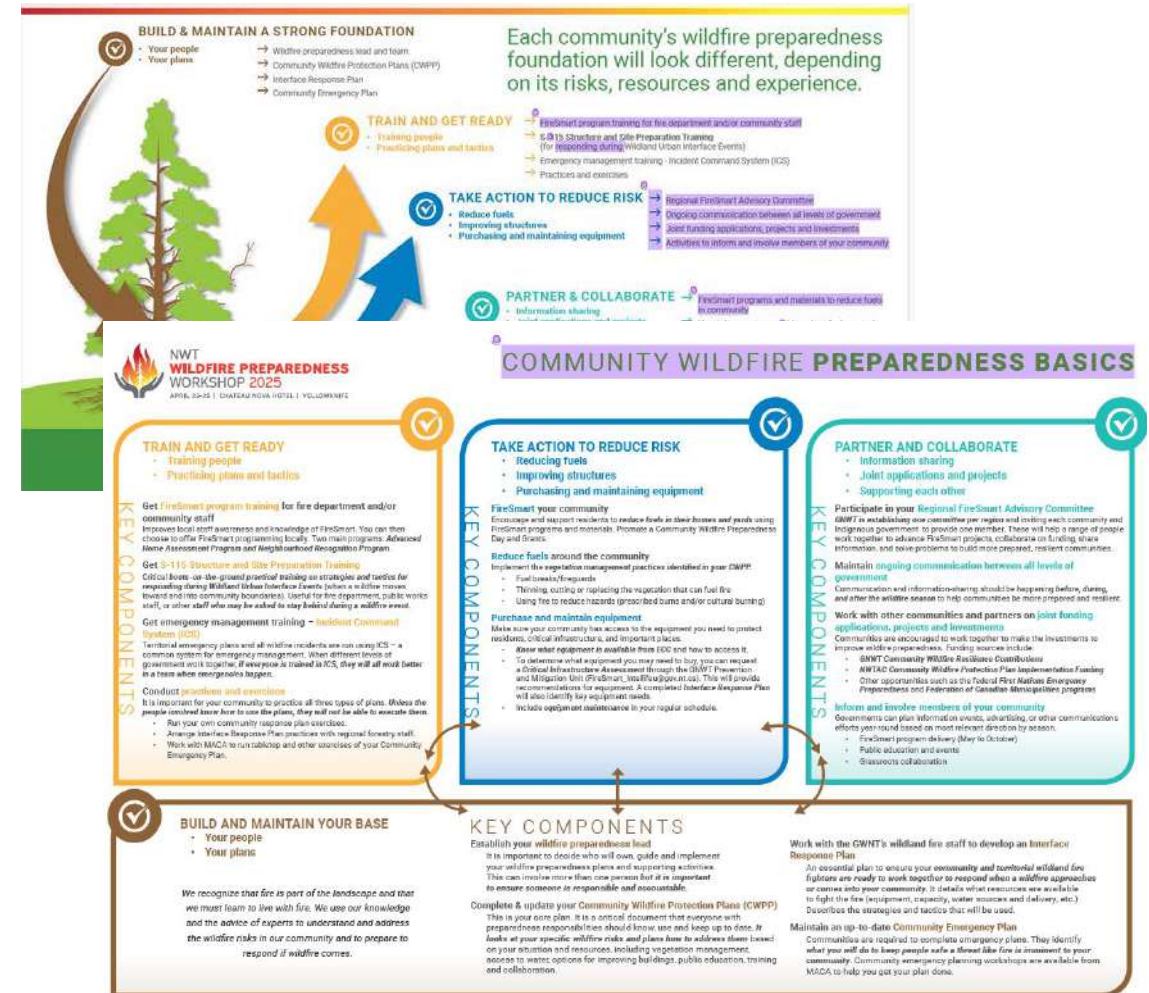
Mapping the wildfire preparedness journey: a work in progress

- With input from you – we present....



Mapping the wildfire preparedness journey: a work in progress

- Designed to:
 - Provide a simple guide to things we will learn together this week
 - Over the long-term – improve (with your help this week!), develop other tools to help your communities prepare for wildfire.
 - Capture the key activities which are currently available to help you on your wildfire preparedness journey in the NWT
 - Recognize that every journey will look different (resources, community size, etc.)





Step One: Build and maintain your foundation

Your people

- Someone must be accountable for wildfire preparedness
- Can (and ideally, should) involve a team of several who are engaged
- Can be drawn from existing public safety staff:
 - Local Emergency Management Organization
 - Fire department
 - Bylaw/public safety
- They are not alone!
 - Wildfire preparedness requires every level of government working hand-in-hand



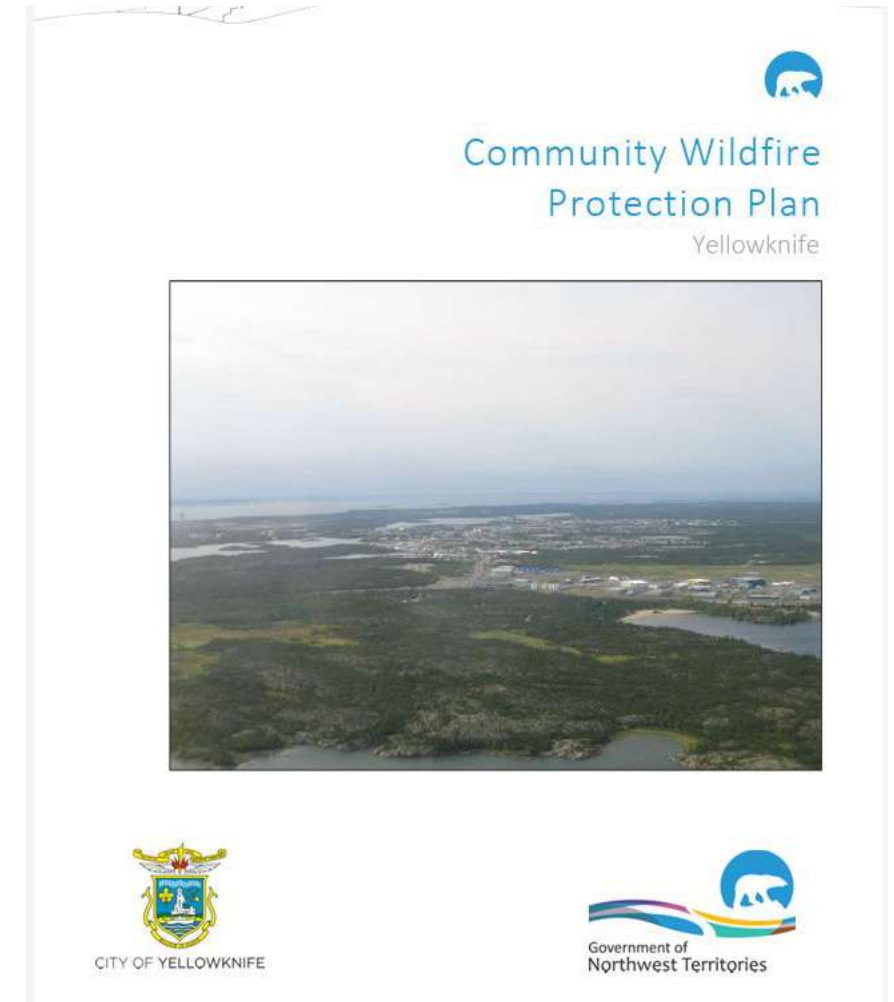
Your plans

- Your plans allow you to be ready to act.
- Three key plans to be maintained:
 - Community Wildfire Protection Plan
 - Interface Response Plan
 - Community Emergency Plan



Decoding the Jargon: Community Wildfire Protection Plans

- A plan including:
 - Your community's level of wildfire risk based on fuels, weather norms, topography, community composition (i.e. neighbourhoods, building materials, etc.)
 - How to address that threat through:
 - Fuel breaks.
 - Fuel reduction:
 - Prescribed fire
 - Personal preparedness (i.e. FireSmarting individual homes)
 - Cross-training
 - Public education
 - Interagency cooperation
 - Development considerations



Decoding the Jargon: Interface Response Plan

- A detailed plan on how structural and wildland firefighters, and support staff will respond together in a wildfire event that threatens your community.
- Should be built in partnership between community and wildland fire professionals.
- Includes:
 - People: how many firefighters?
 - Equipment: how many pumps, how much hose, how many engines, how much heavy equipment?
 - Water sources
 - Critical values for protection (infrastructure, social, economic, cultural)
 - Strategy and tactics (i.e. sprinkler lines required, structure defense strategies)
 - Public safety concerns
 - Operational communications



Decoding the Jargon: Community Emergency Plan

- A detailed plan on how your community will respond when an emergency disrupts everyday life
- Includes:
 - Evacuation plans and contingencies
 - Critical essential staff
 - Continuing critical services in an emergency (i.e. power, water, heat, gas, food)
 - Roles and responsibilities



A good foundation needs good maintenance

- Like any house - you don't build your foundation and forget about it!
- Maintain your plans
 - Community Wildfire Protection Plan: in general, every five years (or whenever your community changes)
 - Interface Response Plans: reviewed annually, updated as people, equipment, water sources, etc. change
- Maintain your people
 - Maintain their training
 - Ensure someone stays accountable even after you have staff turnover





Step Two: Train and Get Ready

Start with the basics

- Take advantage of FireSmart training for your local fire department, public safety staff, or public work staff
 - Free from ECC
- Ensure all responders are trained in the Incident Command System
 - Incident Command System = a predictable, expandable, common organization structure for managing any event or emergency
 - Prepare staff to work together with other agencies in an emergency
 - ICS-100 available free online through school of community government – all responders should have as a minimum
 - ICS-200 for captains/supervisors, ICS-300 for leadership
- Discuss response planning annually - community + regional forestry staff.
 - People
 - Equipment
 - Communications (operational, informational)



Take the next step

- Work with ECC to arrange S-115 (structure and site preparation training) for your local firefighters and/or public works staff
 - Available for free - just email me
 - Prepares your team to protect your community during a wildland fire event - and work in a larger team.
- Annual exercises: practice practice PRACTICE - every year with regional forestry staff.
- Advance Incident Command System training in your organization.
- When you're ready, work with GNWT (ECC, MACA) to arrange higher levels of Wildland Urban Interface response training (S-215, S-315)
 - Some communities are there, many are not – it is new to us as well.
 - Broader training framework under development



Maintain, maintain, maintain

- When you have turnover, make sure to arrange training to refresh your ranks.
- Keep track of who is trained in your organization.
- If you ever need help or want suggestions – reach out to us!
 - Your regional forestry counterparts and the GNWT's wildfire prevention and mitigation unit are your friends!





Step Three: Take Action to Reduce Risk

Reduce fuels around your community

- Focus: at the edge of your neighbourhoods
- Use your Community Wildfire Protection Plan as your guide
- Work with regional forestry staff to identify new opportunities (i.e. fuel breaks, fuel reduction, prescribed fire)
 - Feed back into planning – update your Community Wildfire Protection Plans when new ideas identified
- Understand regulatory requirements
- Funding is available to support!
 - NWT Association of Communities – CWPP Implementation Funding
 - GNWT - Community Wildfire Resilience Contributions
 - Additional funding may be available periodically through federal programs (i.e. CIRNAC, NRCAN)



Assess your critical infrastructure

- Focus: preparing ahead of time to know the risks at the areas most important to you and address them
- Work with GNWT wildfire prevention and mitigation unit to arrange assessments where they have not been completed already
 - Additional capacity for assessments now
- Address FireSmart tasks at facilities/locations
- Understand equipment needs (i.e. sprinklers, hose, pumps)
- Purchase and maintain equipment
- Update regional forestry staff on changes (i.e. equipment purchases locally)



Promote FireSmart in your community

- Focus: individual homes, businesses
- Public education – FireSmart resources
 - FireSmart NWT website and resources
 - FireSmart Begins at Home App
 - Information events
- Programming – FireSmart Advanced Home Assessment + Neighbourhood Recognition Programs
 - Cross-training available for free to offer locally
 - ECC to deliver where capacity does not allow
- Promote FireSmart training opportunities
 - FireSmart 101 – online, free (great for any resident)
 - FireSmart Ambassador – online, free (great for local staff)
- Annual programs
 - FireSmart Community Wildfire Prep Day Funding





Every Step Of The Way: Partner and Collaborate!

Maintain ongoing communication

- All levels of government
- Set an annual schedule
- Community engagement efforts in winter + spring = great time to practice, share concerns, get on the same page
- Keep all parties updated on changes
 - Community developments (i.e. new neighbourhoods = new threats?)
 - Equipment purchases
 - Training needs/wants



Inform and involve your people

- The best fuel break may not work if your people aren't acting at their homes + businesses
- Hold public events/meetings
 - Invite your regional forestry staff, MACA staff, wildfire prevention and mitigation unit
- Invite ideas as part of your governance
 - Residents have great ideas – make them feel welcome to raise them
- Use FireSmart NWT resources to communicate to your people
 - Distribute however you communicate – materials available for social media, print, community radio



Find opportunities for funding collaboration

- We can find more resources when we work together
- Consider partnerships:
 - Between Indigenous governments and hamlets/villages/towns etc.
 - Between multiple communities/Indigenous governments
 - Between other levels of government and GNWT (leverage unique sources, unique capacities)
 - Between governments and NGOs
 - Between governments or NGOs and engaged neighbourhood associations



Participate in regional FireSmart committees

- New initiative - developing
- Use your Community Wildfire Protection Plan as your guide
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Next Steps

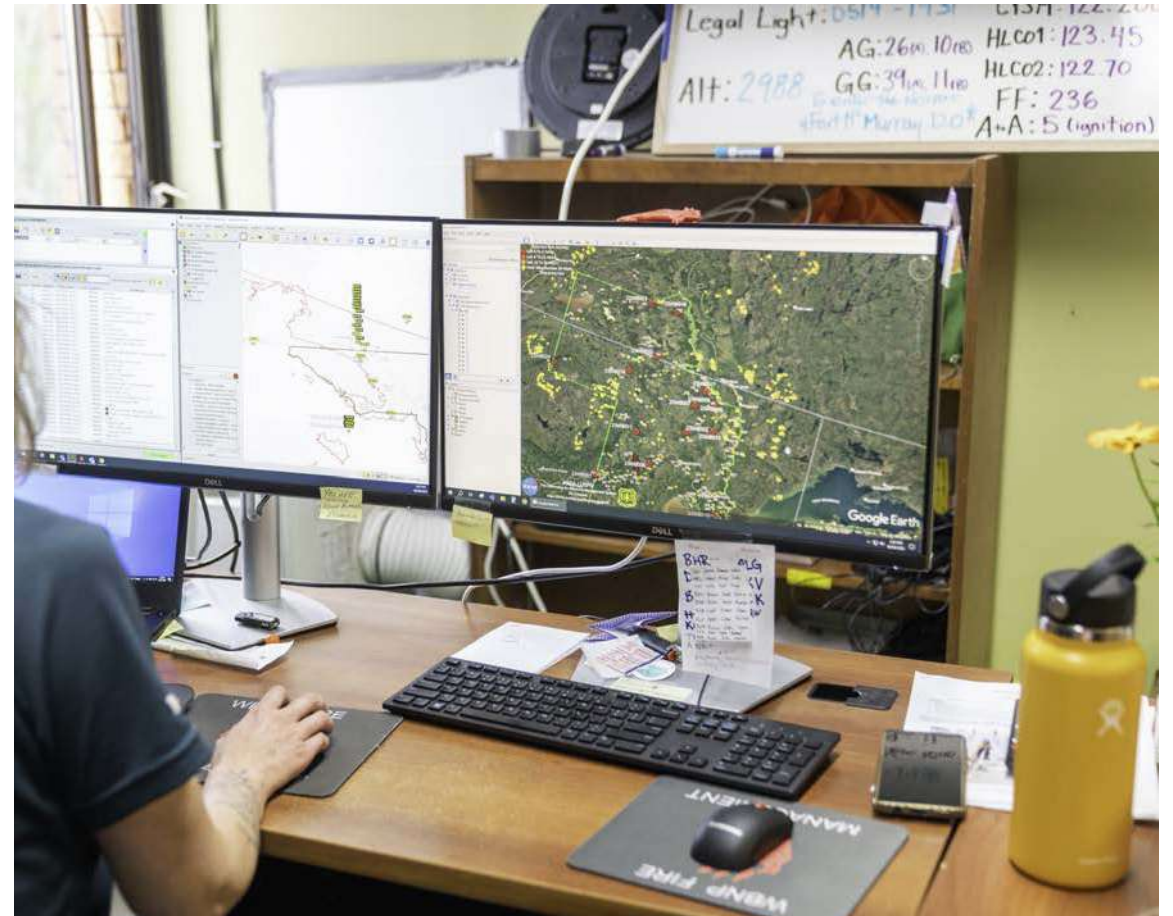
Hone the journey

- With continued input from you and others, we can hone this path and make it a useful guide to wildfire resilience
- Partnership and collaboration as we all make the journey towards a more resilient territory – together!



Develop more supporting resources

- Development of webinars and other resources
- Geared to your needs to help you along this journey



Enjoy the workshop!

FireSmart NWT Website



www.ecc.gov.nt.ca/FireSmart

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**Contact the Wildfire
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Unit**

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