

A RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO RURAL FIRE SUPPRESSION IN AREA D

“OPERATOR...I'D LIKE TO REPORT A FIRE.”

A frightening thought, isn't it? Smoke in the house. “Should I call 911, or should I look for the fire and try and put it out myself? I didn't think that this could ever happen to me.”

Unfortunately, it can and does happen to some residents every year. Most fires are preventable, but some are not. Your best defenses against injury and catastrophic damage from a fire are **preparedness and haste**.

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) has two well-established volunteer fire departments in Area D (at Garibaldi and Britannia Beach) and an excellent Emergency Management Program. It also has a strong relationship with the Ministry of Forests in dealing with Wildland Interface fires (forest fires that threaten residential areas) and fires within unprotected areas.

In addition to the SLRD's Electoral Area fire services, the District of Squamish, the Resort Municipality of Whistler, the Village of Pemberton and the District of Lillooet have excellent fire departments of their own.

Also included in this package is a copy of the Ministry of Forests very informative Fire Smart brochure to help you prepare for Wildfire situations.

We hope that this guide will be of assistance to you in protecting you, your family and your property.

CALLING FOR HELP

911 is an easy-to-remember, 3-digit telephone number that gives you immediate access to emergency services. The SLRD's **911** Emergency Telephone System is available to most residents that require Police, Ambulance or Fire services. The system is very fast and is manned 24 hours a day. When you dial **911**, the operator will ask you which service you require - Police, Fire or Ambulance.



If you request Fire assistance, the **911** operator will hand you off to the E-Comm Dispatcher who will take details from you and call out and maintain continuous communication with the appropriate fire department. The time it takes from your initial call to **911** to fire department call-out is measured in seconds – the fire department would be dispatched faster than you could dial (and remember) a conventional 10-digit telephone number.

If you see or smell smoke in your building and cannot find the source, phone **911 immediately**. Seconds wasted are seconds that the fire could become well-established and very difficult to extinguish.

After you have called **911** and requested assistance, occupants of the building should leave the structure and gather in a safe location until help arrives. If there is thick smoke in the building, crawl out for better visibility – avoid inhaling smoke, if you can.

Once you are out and everybody is safe, you may also wish to walk to the end of your driveway to signal the fire department as it arrives.

Please do not call off-duty firefighters for assistance during an emergency.

CAN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT FIND YOU?

Every home and business within the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District has a house number assigned to it. If you do not know yours, or need one for new construction, simply call the regional district office at (604) 894-6371.

Your fire department carries mapping of the service area, but having your house number clearly posted at the beginning of your driveway can make a huge difference in response time – especially on a dark, rainy night when visibility is poor.

Your house number should be appropriately sized and mounted on a sharply contrasting, engineering grade reflective paper in accordance with [SLRD Bylaw No. 1124, 2009](#). Local sign-painting firms produce high quality, reflective signs, if you don't want to prepare your own. If your house is more than 10 meters from the road, you must also display a sign at the beginning of your driveway, and any intersections in it, in a location clearly visible to on-coming traffic and high enough that snow, weeds and brush will not obscure the sign.

Your fire department will do its very best to reach you during an emergency, but **the responsibility for a clearly marked and accessible driveway is yours.**

Please remember that most fire departments respond with large, heavy trucks that carry a lot of water and equipment – in many cases, they are bigger than dump trucks. The closer that fire-fighting equipment can be to the fire scene, the faster and more effective it will be with the job of fire suppression.

Your driveway should be clearly numbered, at least 15 feet (5 metres) wide, have a solid base of gravel or asphalt and should not be too steep, or have very sharp curves. Please do your best to ensure that the driveway is not cluttered with vehicles, equipment, or anything else such as tree branches that would hinder access by a large emergency vehicle.

Firefighters will tell you that they would prefer to be dispatched to a false alarm than to a burning structure that is too involved to save.



This truck weighs about 37,000 lbs (17 tons) fully loaded, is 11 feet (3.4 m) wide and is 30 feet (9.0m) long.
COULD IT REACH YOUR HOME OR BUSINESS ANY TIME OF THE DAY OR NIGHT?

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

Smoke Alarms are the first line of defense for your business or home – and they're not expensive. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and placement and remember to:

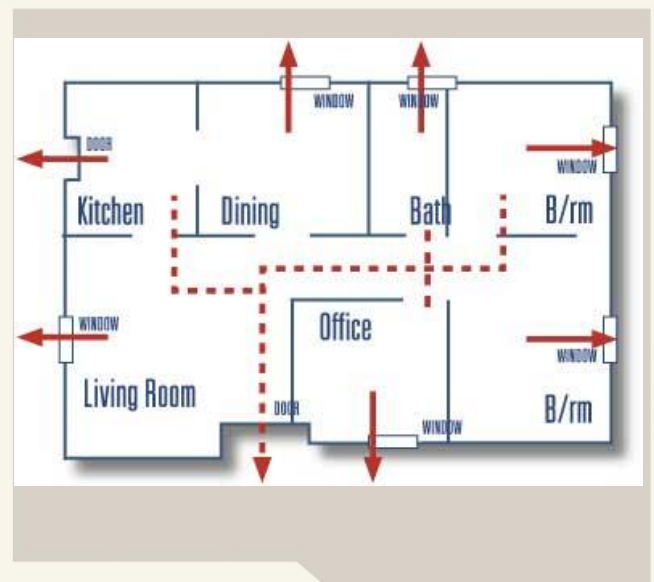
- Test them regularly.
- Change batteries routinely, twice a year.
- Inform your children and other building occupants about what they are, where they are and what to do if they sound an alarm.

Fire Extinguishers are safe and easy to use. A typical house should carry two of them. Each 5-pound (1.5 kg) extinguisher should be certified for use on AB and C fuels (that covers electrical, structural and flammable liquids fires). Again, follow the manufacturer's advice for placement, installation, maintenance and operation. If you've never discharged a fire extinguisher (and most of us haven't), watch for opportunities at your local fire hall – rural departments often host open houses where they offer fire extinguisher training and practice.

An Evacuation Plan is very important. If the smoke alarm is activated, children and other occupants should be clear on how to leave the building and where to meet (or muster) – for their safety.

- If the building is filled with smoke, crawling on the floor may improve visibility, because smoke will be concentrated at the ceiling.
- Try to minimize inhaling the smoke – depending on what is burning, smoke fumes may be toxic.
- Close doors behind you – this will slow the spread of fire.
- Establish an alternate door from which to leave the building, in case the main door is inaccessible.
- Meet at an established location outside the building – a spot that everyone will be able to relate to (even at night) and that is well clear of responding fire trucks.
- Do not try to re-enter the building until the fire department has given you the "all-clear" to do so.

If you represent a group such as a day-care, school class, or just a group of people interested in understanding fire extinguishers, contact your local fire department's non-emergency phone number or email address to arrange a demonstration.



WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

Chimney Cleaning

Especially if you use wood as a primary source of heat, chimney cleaning should be a regular and frequent project. If the accumulated creosote in your chimney ignites, it becomes a difficult fire to access and to extinguish. If a chimney fire is allowed to burn unnoticed, it can lead to severe structural damage and possible building loss. Losses from chimney fires are reported every year.

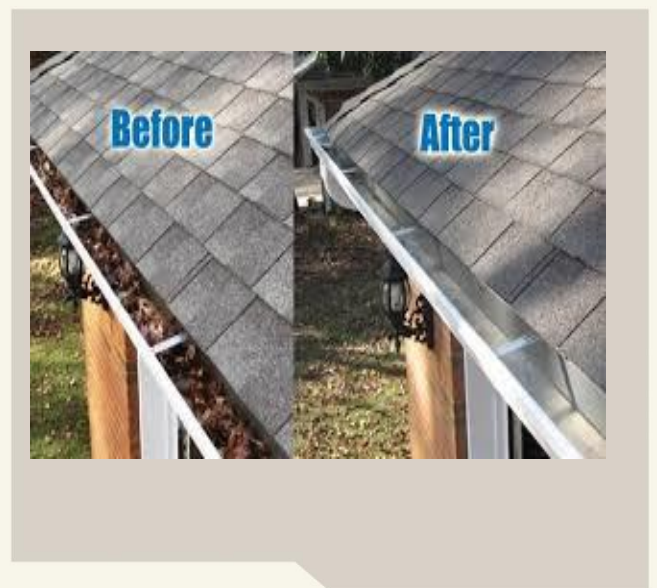
Make sure that you burn only dry, seasoned wood and refrain from burning household garbage or flammable fuels in your fireplace or heater.

Also, remember not to stack your firewood against, or too near the house.

Roof Gutter Cleaning

Along with rain water, roof gutters collect leaves, branches, and conifer cones. During an extended period of dry weather, these dry out in the gutter and become a fire hazard that a spark or ember from a nearby fire can easily ignite. Once established, a fire in the gutter can easily spread into the roof structure of your building.

Regular cleaning reduces that risk. The closer your building is to established trees, the more often you should clean your gutters.



WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

Water Supply during a fire is always a challenge for rural fire departments when they respond to areas that are not serviced by fire hydrants. Fire departments train regularly to take advantage of any available, nearby water source – swimming pools, lakes, creeks, ditches and even the sea, if necessary. Most departments are equipped with water tanker trucks, but the less distance that these have to travel to collect water, the better.

Can you help?

- Do you have a pond on your property? Have you considered a "pondscape" as a part of your landscaping that could double as a water reservoir in the event of an emergency at your home or business?
- Do you have any water storage tanks on your property, or would you consider placing one in a location that would be accessible by the fire department?

If so, please contact your fire department, using the non-emergency phone number. A member of the department would be happy to assist and to catalog the water source for possible future use. Thank you.

Open Fires for domestic, brush-removal purposes are **prohibited** within the Squamish-Lilloet Regional District, unless they are authorized by permit by the Ministry of Forests. Campfires however, are permitted as long as fires are contained in a pit and do not exceed 1 meter in width and height. Even campfires can be the source of catastrophic fires, if not properly managed. There are more details in the attached FireSmart brochure, but in the simplest of terms:

- Watch the weather and avoid fires in windy conditions – any time of the year.
- Make sure that the amount of fuel you're burning will be manageable.
- Have appropriate tools and a water source available nearby – even for a campfire.
- Don't ever burn household garbage (it's illegal and very inconsiderate to neighbors).
- Extinguish the fire completely before leaving the scene.

For more information on open burning, current burning bans and procedures, please check the Ministry of Forests website at [www .bcwildfire.ca](http://www.bcwildfire.ca)





HAVE YOU CONSIDERED BECOMING A MEMBER OF YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT?

One of the greatest challenges for rural fire departments is recruiting and maintaining a required number of active members to meet safety standards and the insurance industry's requirements. Without that minimum number, there is a risk of losing insurance recognition, or worse, the department itself.

Remember, the service is a volunteer one that property owners agreed to support with taxes and manpower, at referendum, a long time ago.

You don't need to be in prime physical condition, have a specific skill or have experience with other services – just an interest in learning, participating and being a part of a great team. Training is provided for you and the departments offer a range of opportunities and incentives.

So, if you are male or female, working or retired, young or not-so-young, interested in operating vehicles (or equipment, or radios), or can help with traffic control at an emergency scene, we would love to talk to you. Your support is critical to the fire department's success and to the effectiveness of your local rural fire service.

If you would like more information:

Britannia Beach VFD
Email: [svirgint \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:svirgint@gmail.com)

Or, stop by the fire hall on practice night, Tuesdays at 6:45pm.

Garibaldi VFD non-emergency phone
(604) 932-2995

Or, stop by the new fire hall on practice night, the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 7:00pm.