

Adapting to climate change: Getting smart about fire protection

*Making communities more resilient is part of our purpose. One way we do that is by helping Canadians adapt to climate change by partnering with charities that are implementing practical solutions to help protect people from extreme weather. This is the first in a series about how our **Intact Adaptation Action Grant partners** are helping people.*

Back-to-back, record-breaking fire seasons destroyed more than 600 buildings and forced more than 70,000 British Columbians to evacuate their homes in 2017 and 2018. But it's not only B.C., or even Western Canada, that's at risk — across the country [more wildfires are affecting more people](#) than ever before.

And that risk is only going to increase. Natural Resources Canada [predicts climate change](#) will cause fires to burn more intensely and cover larger areas in the coming decades.

We know first-hand the financial and emotional toll a fire can have on people – we see it through our customers. That's why we partnered with [FireSmart Canada](#) to grow the FireSmart Home Partners program, which helps homeowners reduce their risk of wildfire.

“Managing wildfire requires balancing its natural role with the protection of human life, property and economic values. This demands a comprehensive risk management approach that includes mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery,” says Laura Stewart, president of FireSmart Canada.

Studies show that homes can ignite not only from the condition of the home itself, but also from the conditions for up to 100 metres from the foundation. That's why FireSmart-trained firefighters begin with the house and work outwards to identify potential fuel for fires. This includes everything from building materials to patio furniture, and where woodpiles are kept.

But FireSmart had two big challenges to overcome to ensure as many firefighters as possible are trained: time and resources. Since most firefighters are volunteers, many of them couldn't afford to take the time off to attend the three-day, in-person training.

Intact's support allowed FireSmart to create an online course for the theory portion of the training, reducing the in-person training to just one day. This led to a five-fold increase in FireSmart-trained firefighters in Alberta, which means more homes can be assessed, empowering more homeowners to take simple steps to protect themselves from wildfire.

Since the Home Partners Program launched in 2016, more than 1,100 homes have been assessed in Alberta, and the program is expanding to British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Are you interested in protecting your home from wildfire? [Check out FireSmart's top 10 tips.](#)

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