

Wildfire Awareness Society Presentation

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What we hope to cover tonight



- What is the Wildfire Awareness Society?
- What risks are we aware of?
- How are the risks currently being addressed?
- What can you do to reduce the risks of personal losses?
- What are the priorities?
- What happens if you are ordered to evacuate?

The Wildfire Awareness Society (WAS): wildfireawareness.org



- A group of Whitehorse residents with experience and/or interest in helping Whitehorse cope with the wildfires formed in 2017. (post-Fort McMurray)
- Initially focussed on reducing fire fuel around Whitehorse
- Now focused on two issues:
 1. Making our houses resistant to ember showers from fires
 2. Helping Whitehorse to be ready if evacuation becomes necessary

What's the Big Deal?- 2023 numbers



- Area burned in Canada was 18.5 million ha; Previous record was 7.6 million ha (1989); Previous 10-year average was 2.5 million ha.
- Climate change has increased fire season by 20% in 30 years.
- 250,000 people were evacuated;
- Fire fighting costs estimated at \$1.4 billion in W. Canada ALONE.

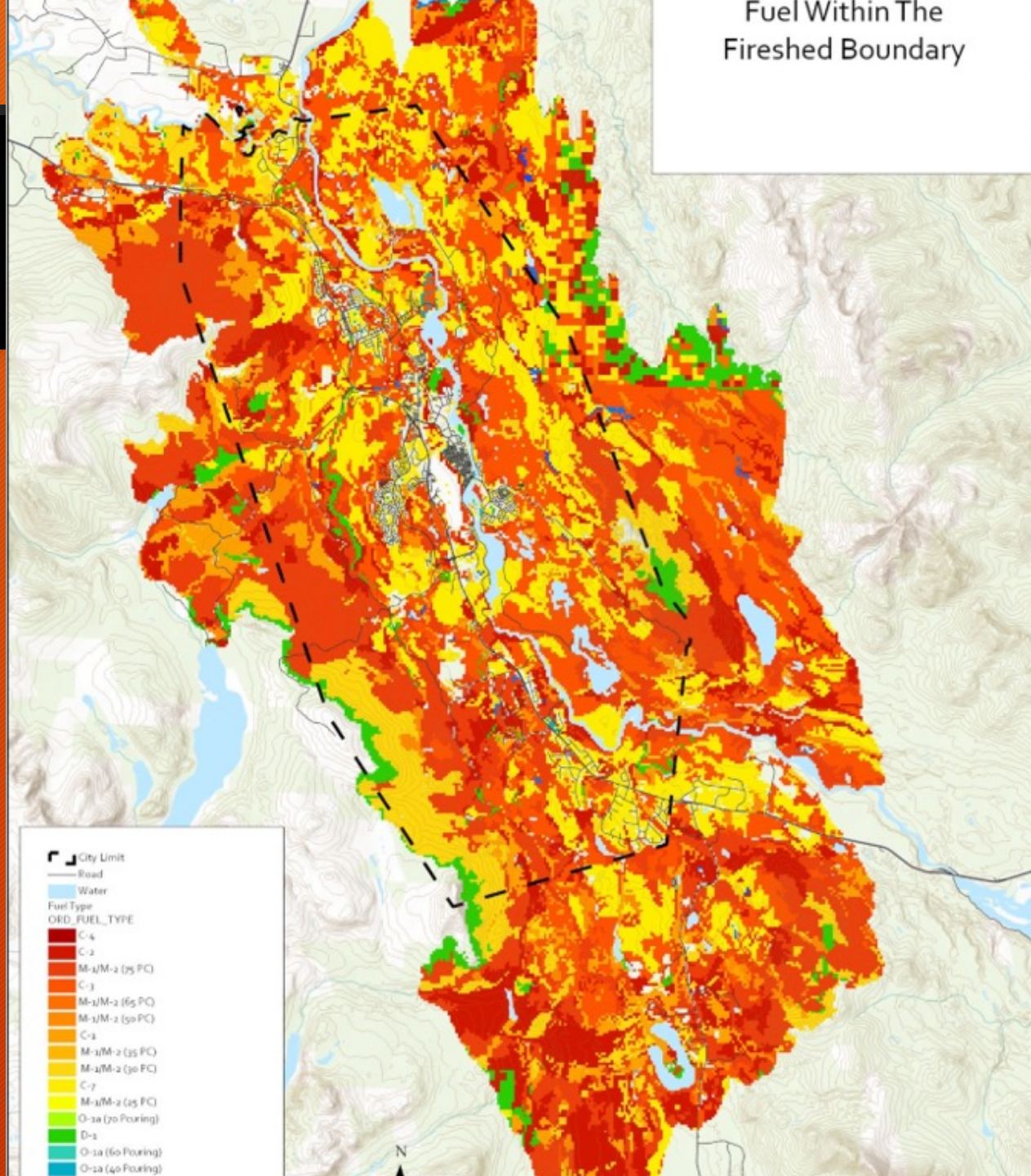
Current Approach Around Whitehorse to Prepare for Wildfire



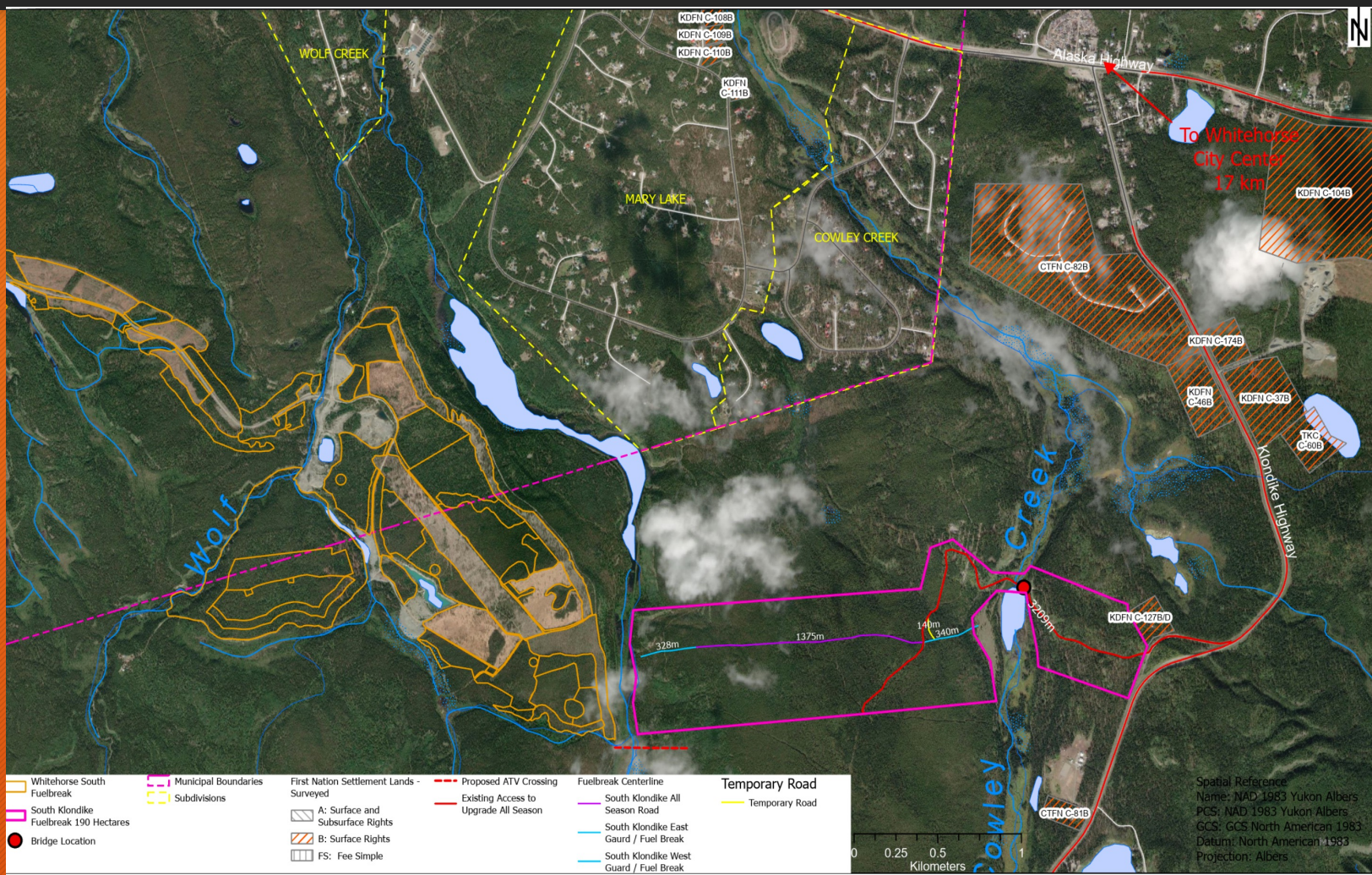
- Modifications to the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI):
- Community FireSmart Projects:
- Residential properties FireSmart: some but this is the greatest need
- Evacuation planning

The upshot

Whitehorse is seriously exposed!



South Whitehorse Fuel Break



Embers are the most likely start of a Fire



Ember Shower from Fort McMurray Fire



2016/05/04 02:46:33

Always

19750/MI

Understanding fire behaviour

How wildland fires spread



FIRE + FUEL = WHY HOMES BURN



Unmitigated Property



FireSmart-Mitigated Property

Fuels include trees, woodpiles, structures, fences, plants, etc.



Embers & Sparks

Embers and sparks can blow up to two kilometres ahead of a wildland fire. They can ignite materials on or near your home causing severe damage.



Extreme Heat

Radiant heat from a wildland fire can melt vinyl siding, ignite your home, and even break windows. Extreme heat can come from flames within 30 metres of your home.



Direct Flame

As wildland fires spread toward homes, they ignite other flammable objects in their path. To stop wildland fire from directly affecting your home, create breaks in this path, especially close to your home.



Residential fuels

Burning structures and adjacent vegetation are significant sources of burning embers that can continue community fire spread hours after significant wildfire exposures have ceased.



Why FireSmart?



Why FireSmart?



Wildfire Structure Survival Statistics



Flammable Roof
No Treatment
No Defensive Action

Flammable Roof

Non-Flammable Roof

All Vegetation Treated
Within 10m of Home

Non-combustible
Zone & Zone 1



Why FireSmart? = Wildfire Resilience



- Reduce risk of property loss – your property and your neighbour's!
- FireSmarted property is more defensible!
- Reduced anxiety if ordered to evacuate.
- Potential for reduced insurance??

Home Ignition zone



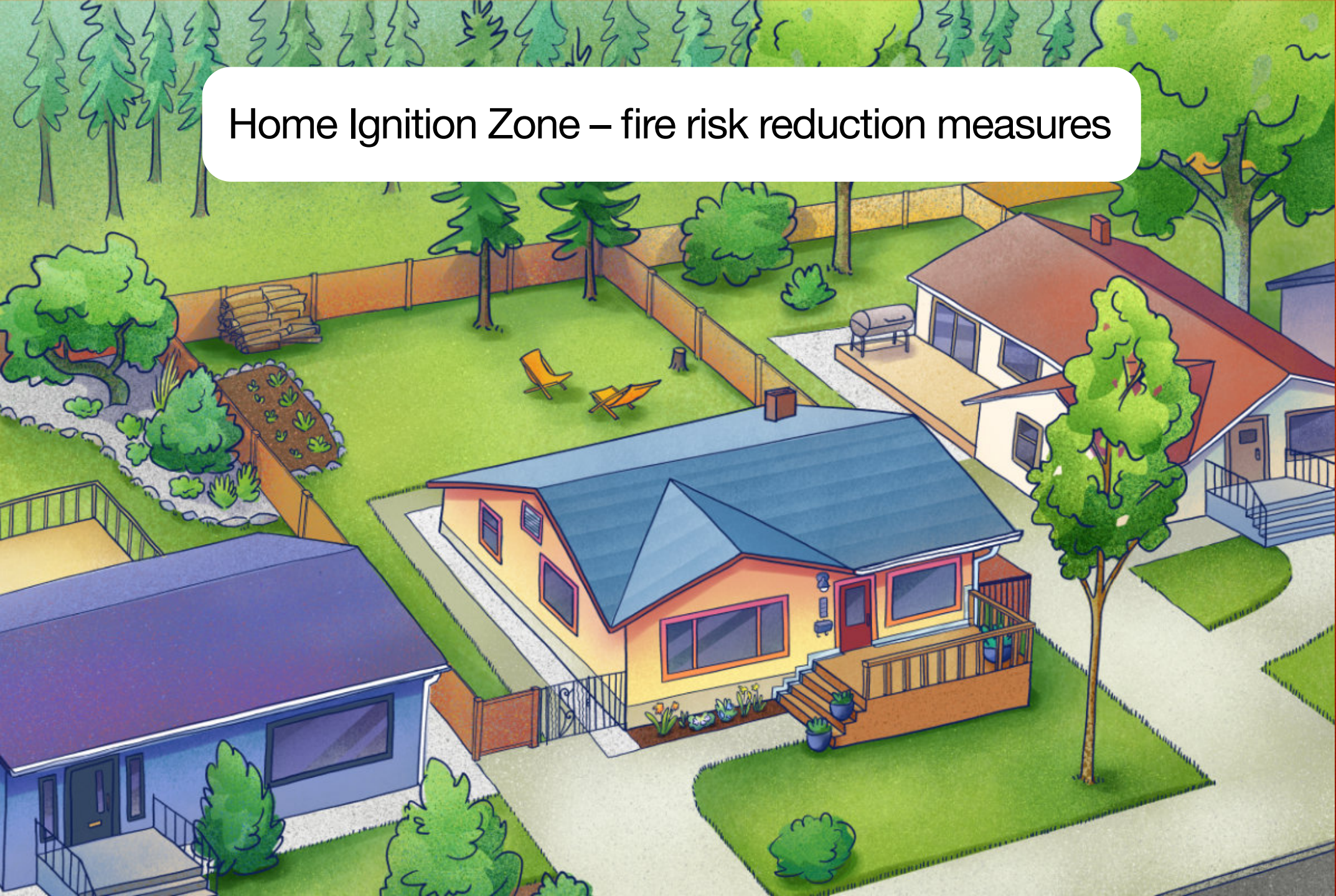
EXTENDED ZONE
10m to 30m

INTERMEDIATE ZONE
1.5m to 10m

IMMEDIATE ZONE
0m to 1.5m

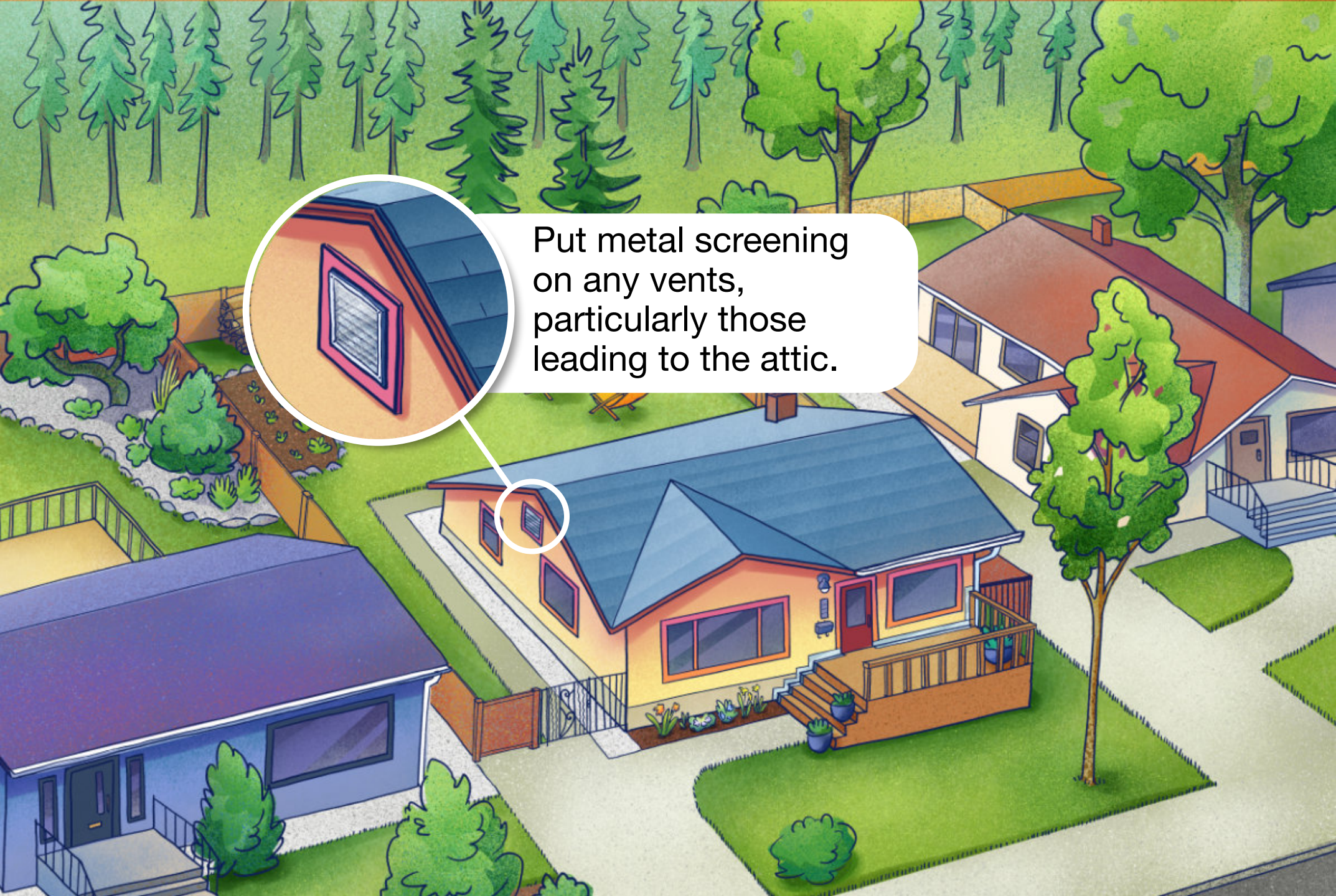


Home Ignition Zone – fire risk reduction measures



Keep roof and roof gutters clean of needles and leaves.



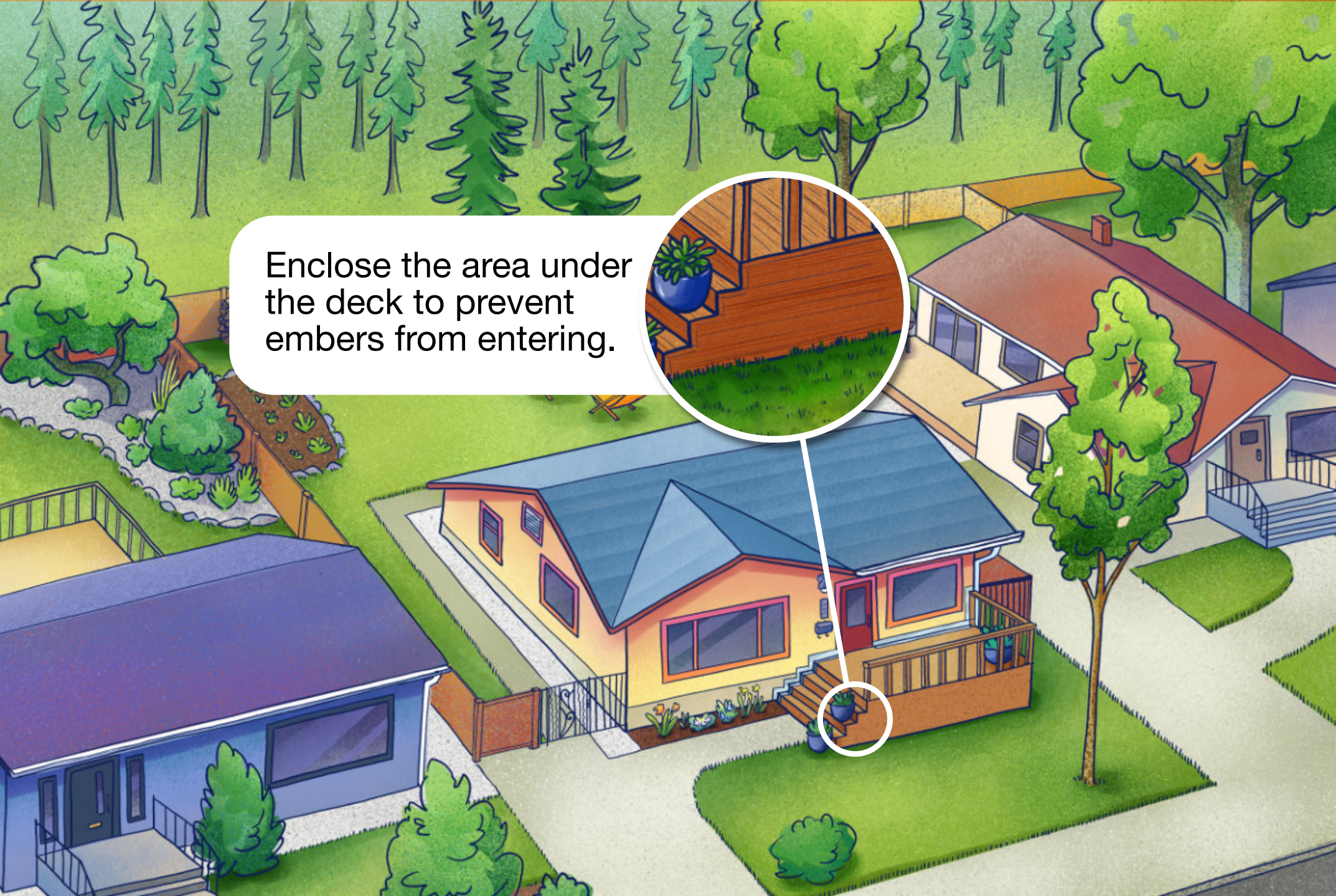


Put metal screening on any vents, particularly those leading to the attic.



If a deck connects to the house, create a non-flammable connection between the deck and the house.





Enclose the area under the deck to prevent embers from entering.



Create a 1.5 meter non-combustible zone around your house, deck and any outbuildings.





If a wooden fence connects to the house, the last 1.5 meters to the house should be non-combustible.

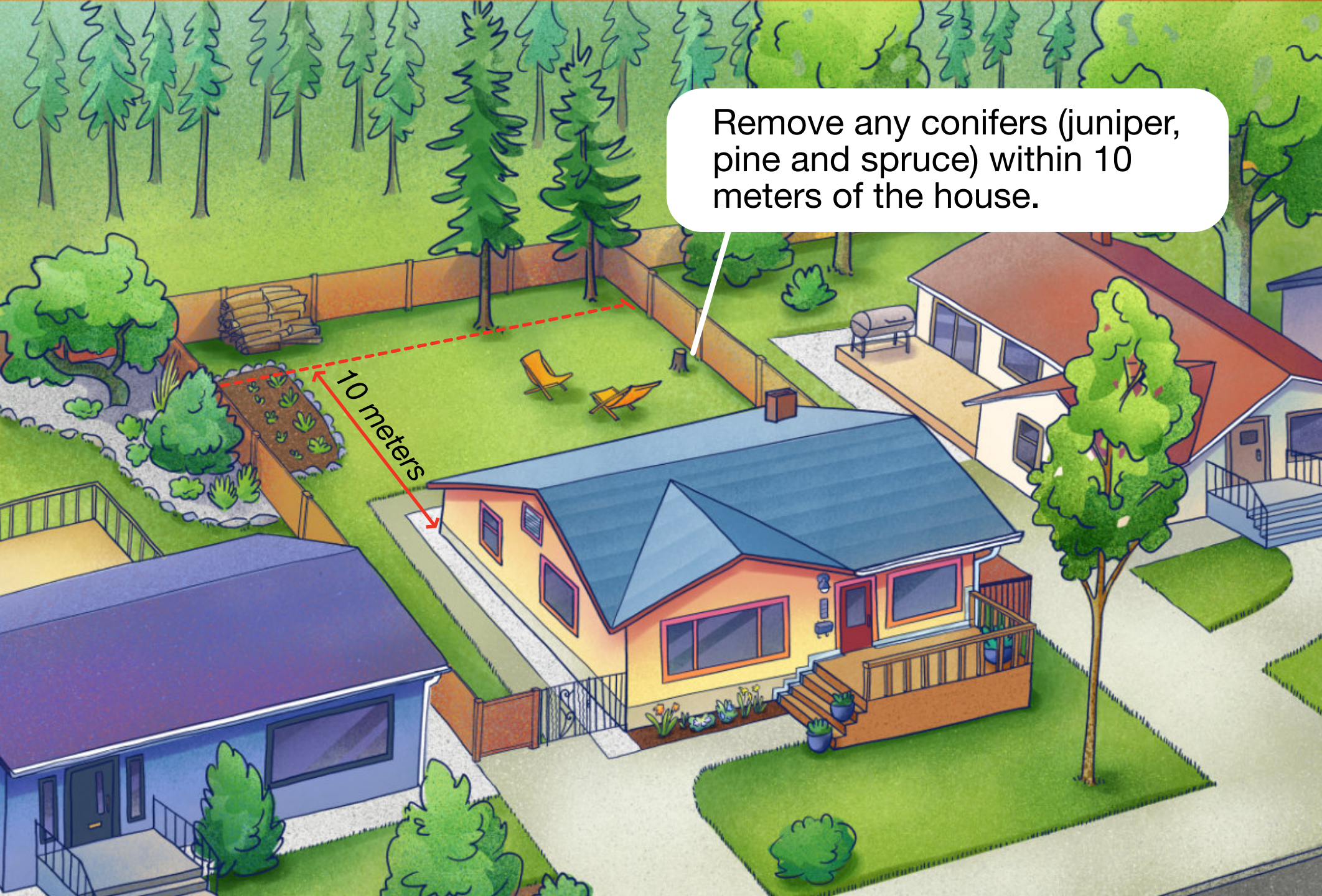




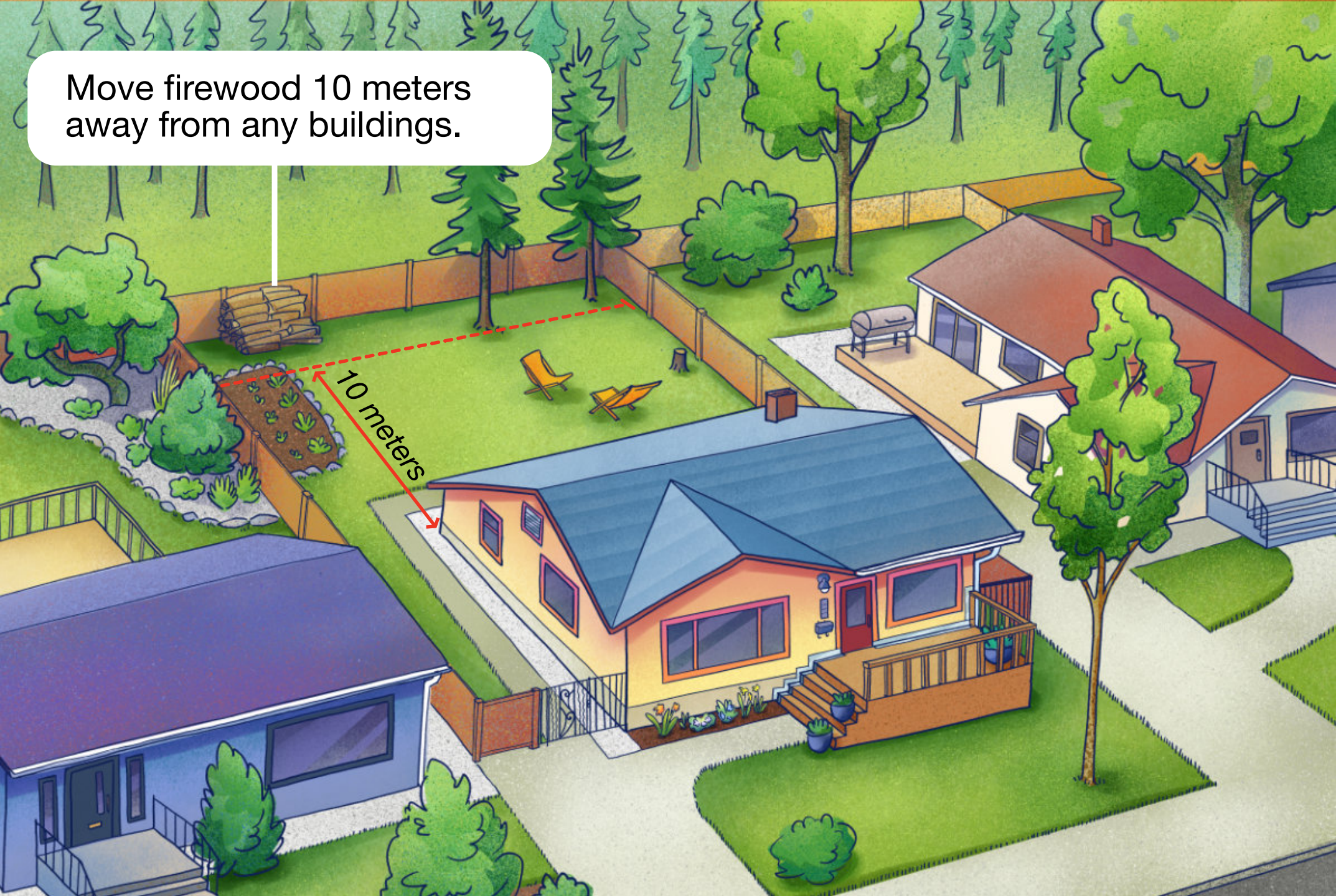
Avoid using bark or pine needle mulch in any gardens close to the house.



Remove any conifers (juniper, pine and spruce) within 10 meters of the house.



Move firewood 10 meters away from any buildings.





FireSmart Now!



REVIEW: Key Points - Landscape



- Make the 1.5m zone non-combustible!
- Make the 1.5 m-10m zone green and clean!
- Space trees at least 3 metres apart (at crown)
- Prune all branches to 2 metres above ground

Just in case



Evacuation Preparedness for 2024 Fire Season

Three Parts of Preparedness

1. Municipal planning
2. Personal planning
3. Business planning



Evacuation Indicators



- **Extreme weather** - dry forest, less than 30% humidity, above 30 C, more than 30 kmph wind
- **Evacuation Alert** - declared by City, possibly by neighbourhood. Search [Emergency Alert Whitehorse](#)
- **Evacuation Order** - declared by City by neighbourhood

Municipal Evacuation Planning

from Public Safety Protection Plan Whitehorse- March 2022



Assembly Point + Reception Center + Parking

- Golden Horn School
- Boyle Barracks in Mary Lake
- Mount Sima Ski Hill

Assembly Point Only

- Kookatsoon Day Use area
- Private Golden Horn Acreages
- McCrae Petrol Fuel Stations
- Old Whitehorse Copper Mine site

Municipal Evacuation Planning

from Public Safety Protection Plan Whitehorse- March 2022



Assembly Areas



Evacuation Centre
ie CGC



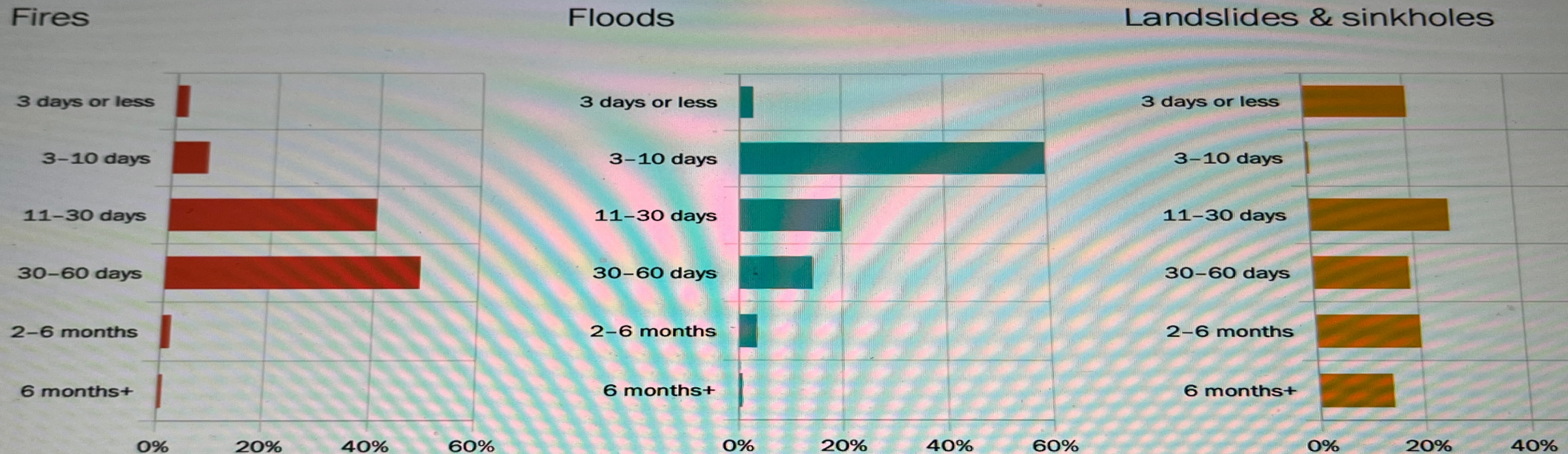
Campgrounds, Communities?

Fires, Floods, Landslides and Sinkholes

The Tye, 3 April, 2023



Most evacuations for fires, floods and landslides in B.C. last more than three days



Estimates are based on BC government open data gathered between May 2017 and January 2023 and weighted by census population counts. (Hover over the data points for more details.) Analysis by Jens von Bergmann.

Length of Evacuation



Average Evacuation in BC is 22 days

Given our remote location and few road options to evacuate on, this may be longer

BC records over 6 years

Personal Evacuation Planning



1. Make an **emergency plan** and discuss with family. Is it integrated with your child's school evacuation plans?
2. Have an evacuation kit that meets all your basic needs. 72 hours may not be long enough for Whitehorse residents.
3. **May-September** - make sure your vehicle is always full of fuel.
4. Check your **fire insurance coverage**.

Make a Plan with Your Family



- Ensure your family has made a plan of where to meet depending on the direction of the fire.
- Know where Safe gathering places are for family if you can't meet up with them. Can neighbours help if there is no vehicle at home to evacuate in?
- Cell phones are currently recommended for information about evacuation - BUT THEY may NOT be working.

What to take?



What would you take on a wilderness camping trip with your pet(s) without access to a store, fuel, or clean water?
(If heading to Alaska you need passports !)

Leaving your house to evacuate



- 1) Turn off gas and HRV.
- 2) Close all windows.
- 3) Ensure doors have no gaps.
- 4) Move vehicles away from house, garage doors closed.
- 5) Flammables away from house.
- 6) Remove all your deck furniture unless it's metal. Store cushions inside the house.
- 7) Turn off then remove the propane container from your BBQ and place 10 meters from the house. Be sure to also remove the BBQ cover, which is flammable.

Not sure what to take?



www.getprepared.ca

Current Status



- The City has a high level evacuation plan.
- Emergency Measures Organization Yukon will work with the City during an evacuation as the City will not be able to do this without Territorial assistance

Preparedness takes everyone's involvement



Crossed fingers is not a plan.

Thank you.

www.wildfireawareness.org

More Wildfire Information



- [British Columbia FireSmart](#)
- [Alberta: Wildfire preparedness](#)
- [FireSmart Canada](#)
- [Yukon: Prevent and prepare for wildfires](#)
- [California: Prepare for wildfire](#)
- [Whitehorse: FireSmart](#)