

# MARSH LAKE FIRE RESCUE SOCIETY

# EMERGENCY PLANNING

Marsh Lake - Yukon Territory - A Special Edition of Marsh Lake News

Free

## Wildfire threatens Tom's Store and Post Office



An out of control wildfire moved rapidly across the Alaska Highway into New Constabulary and threatened to engulf Tom's store, the cafe and post office, and all of the homes in the area.

This photograph was taken... well it hasn't been taken yet, but it may be some day. (See Editor's Corner on page 12)

Statement made by retired Marsh Lake Fire Chief Dennis Levy referring to the possibility of a wildfire in the Marsh Lake area:

**"It's not a question of *if* it will happen.  
It's a question of *when*."**

### In case of wildfire

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**"If you own the tree,  
you own the fuel.**

**If you own the fuel,  
you own the fire."**

# THE DAY OUR LUCK RUNS OUT!

By MLFR Fire Chief Juergen Willms

The 2003 B.C. experience (think Kelowna) shows us that when luck runs out the beautiful place we call home could be entirely different. We need to see and understand this reality very clearly since we choose to make our home in the bush, and fire is a reality of mother nature and a very real possibility.

“...more houses were lost due to the emberstorms.”

A wildfire on a larger scale will present us with two major dangers:

- A) to get over-rolled by a fast moving fire and/or;
- B) to have a lot of embers (firebrands) produced by that fire that will threaten houses with spot fires.

Both dangers are equally real.

In B.C. more houses were lost due to the emberstorms. Firefighters there counted over a thousand burn holes on a square metre piece of heavy pool tarp. Embers present a threat that has the potential to burn your home down a thousand times.

To live up to that danger we have to make conscious choices. We could say: *“Let’s not worry about it. Not much we can do, and besides, the insurance company will pick up the tab in the end.”* That’s one way to look at it, but maybe you don’t have house insurance or maybe don’t trust insurance companies.

Marsh Lake Fire Rescue certainly doesn’t subscribe to this idea of accepted indifference – after all, we live in a community, and our actions, or

lack-there-of, have implications for ourselves, our family, our neighbours and our environment.

There’s much every homeowner out here can do to be prepared when our luck runs out, like:

- FireSmart your property (see article on page 8)
- Close all eaves and holes (vents, etc.) in your structure that could harbour dangerous embers.
- Perhaps get a gas-powered sprinkler system feeding off the lake, or a generator that will keep your well-pump running even if the power goes down

Throughout this newsletter you’ll find some suggestions on how to make yourself, family and home safer when it comes to wildfire. It’s a complex issue – and members of Marsh Lake Fire Rescue are there to talk you through this and give advice.

Another way of ensuring our community is safer is by participating in upcoming research/assessments by Marsh Lake Fire Rescue.

We have put effort into ways to collectively secure the community from wildfire threat, including putting together a comprehensive computerized mapping system which will allow us to pre-plan and evaluate better.

**You can support this initiative by allowing us to include your home on the map.**

The **Marsh Lake Fire Survey** (see article on page 5) – which will involve trained fire rescue responders going door-to-door – will start in the coming weeks.

**We would like to visit and talk about hazards, improvements, and options with you.**

Most importantly, **please come to the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting/open house**, where we’ll address these issues in detail, talk about protection possibilities, have a chance to meet with the people involved in local fire suppression, and most importantly learn what everyone can do to improve their odds.

Sure it may cut into your weekend – but spending time getting prepared is a small price to pay when considering the day when our luck runs out!



**“...with *FireSmart* planning and preparation risks of fire losses can be reduced...”**

An article submitted by the Office of the Fire Commissioner in British Columbia. April 11, 2005

The summer of 2003 was identified as one of the worst wildland fire seasons on record in British Columbia. The abnormally hot, dry weather resulted in over 2,500 wildfire starts over a vast area, mostly in the Interior of the province. While the Province has seen extensive forest fires before, it was the first time so many encroached onto communities located in the forest interface.

The interface fires of the summer of 2003 destroyed over 334 homes and many businesses, and forced the evacuation of more than 50,000 people. Over 260,000 hectares of forest were destroyed. The total cost of the Firestorm was estimated at \$700 million which included property losses and the cost of fighting the fires. The greatest cost of all however was the loss of three lives; pilots who died in the line of duty.

**“In British Columbia the effects of the 2003 firestorm are still being felt.”**

Lessons learned from the experiences of the 2003 fire season were many. Together with the BC Ministry of Forests, the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) has focused much of its effort on raising community awareness about the threat of wildfire.

In particular BC has adopted *FireSmart*, an Alberta based program from Partners in Protection which provides practical tools and information about preventative measures communities can take to reduce the risk of loss, damage and injury from interface fires.

Home owners play a critical role in *FireSmarting* their communities by taking personal responsibility for preparing and protecting their home from the risk of wildfire.



The effects of wildfire are long term and devastating. In British Columbia the effects of the 2003 firestorm are still being felt. Entire communities in BC continue to struggle with the resulting economic and emotional costs and many residents who lost their homes are still in the process of rebuilding.

The frightening reality of wildfire is one that every community must deal with, however with *FireSmart* planning and preparation risks of fire losses can be reduced and enhanced safety in the wildland urban interface can be realized.

Key strategies to reduce interface hazards around the home include:

- removal of trees, long grass, shrubs, logs, branches and needles within 10 metres of the home
- watering and maintaining lawns surrounding the home
- enclosing eaves and screening vents
- sheathing undersides of balconies, decks and crawl spaces with flame resistant materials
- using fire retardant roofing materials and fire resistant exterior siding.

# WILDFIRE SEASON IS COMING!

By Drew Whittaker

With the thaw on, the sun higher in the sky, buntings and swans returning north and other indicators of the end of a long winter, no doubt the good folks of Marsh Lake will breathe a collective sigh and start thinking of summer. But with summer's fun comes anxiety as well: for the season of barbecues, fishing and swimming is also the season of WILDFIRES.

Retired Marsh Lake Fire Rescue Chief Dennis Levy put it best about the chances of a major wildfire hitting our community: "It's not a question of if it will happen. It's a question of when." We just don't know when.

You see, we live in the boreal forest – an amazingly huge forest ecosystem that covers a great deal of Canada, spanning from parts of the East Coast in a continuous swath north to the Yukon. According to the Boreal Forest Network, 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the world's original forests (i.e. undeveloped forests) are intact today, and Canada is home to 25% of this – largely in the form of boreal forest, long identified as one of the world's three great forest ecosystems. This forest, populated by spruce, pine and poplar, is fire country.

Our part of the boreal forest is also extremely dry – with little precipitation and a layer of permafrost under the soil that prevents deep soaking of the soil. Climate scientists have also demonstrated the increasing warming of the Yukon and other places in northern latitudes in modern times.

Since 1950, Environment Canada charts an increase in temperature of two degrees celsius and an increase of two frost-free days in the Whitehorse area – a considerable increase in such a short period of time given the age of the planet. This increases the risk factors, as wildland fire spread is dependent upon three crucial factors: fuels (e.g. Types of trees, amount of dry dead

fall, etc.), weather (e.g. A key factor is called the "cross-over" – when air temperature outstrips relative humidity) and topography (see fire triangle diagram).

"...more than 1.8 million hectares of Yukon boreal forest burned in 282 forest fires in the summer of 2004."

We have chosen to live in this high fire-risk forest zone – we can not totally suppress this risk, save by perhaps paving it over (a very counterproductive strategy). In fact, our efforts to suppress wildland fire in the here-and-now, tend to increase risk in the future. But we can take certain key precautions to ensure the health of the forest, the safety of ourselves and neighbours, and of our property and possessions.

According to the Yukon News, more than 1.8 million hectares of Yukon boreal forest burned in 282 forest fires in the summer of 2004 – the most "destructive" fire year on record. Our long, hot summer was preceded by the Kelowna area fires, where thousands of homes and square hectares of forest burned.

Summer 2004 was a tense, spooky time for members of the Marsh Lake Fire Rescue crew – who during the unprecedented Territory-wide fire ban monitored campsites for fire, hosed down the dump regularly and maintained a three-person crew ready-for-action. When, during a dry, hot night in July, lightning was crashing close by – we sat by our radios waiting for the worst, got the call, and responded en masse. We were lucky the smoke that was reported (and that we chased around Judas Mountain) turned out to be nothing.

Over the winter, Marsh Lake Fire Rescue has been putting its resources and labour behind getting our community better prepared to deal with the wildland fire that hasn't yet hit.

Special thanks go out to our Fire Chief Juergen Willms for his vision and initiative, and both him and Community Society President Donna Larsen for being pro-active in securing funds from the Community Development Fund. These funds have been devoted to developing a comprehensive plan for our community (which includes planning for evacuation in the event of a major catastrophe) and obtaining key resources (including mapping software and computer gear) that will aid in this objective.

Our fire department will be better prepared for the coming years, but citizens musn't just rely on Fire Rescue volunteers – there is lots to be done by homeowners to prepare for the upcoming fire season. In fact, better educated and aware citizens motivated to make improvements in the best defence against this natural threat.

**You can find out what YOU can do by attending the public meeting at the firehall on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>.**

The goal of this meeting is to raise awareness of wildland fires, to empower citizens and show ways to make improvements on their property to reduce the risks of personal injury and property loss.

At this meeting/presentation, we will be holding presentations/inviting speakers to address issues like:

General fire risk/concepts

FireSmart – how to protect your home from wildfire

Evacuation – what happens when the s\*\*t really does hit the fan

Sprinklers for your property – Benefits and Set-Up Tips

Introduction to the Marsh Lake Survey

Wildfire projections for Marsh Lake

All the above plus the opportunity to mingle and chat with fire prevention and protection industry representatives and skilled and trained fire service workers about practical matters related to your property.

This is also a chance for Marsh Lakers to make an appointment for the Marsh Lake Survey (see article on this page 5), where trained firefighter personnel can come to your property/home and give advice on risks and where to make improvements.

As the experts say, the causes of wildfire are 50% natural (e.g. Lightning) and 50% human-made (e.g. the carelessly-tossed cigarette butt). In a similar vein, there is much we can control in terms of limiting wildland fire risk and spread that are directly related to our human efforts.

Our world is predictably unpredictable and every corner of the planet possesses some unique risk of natural hazard. The folks in San Francisco have their earthquakes; Floridians have their hurricanes; and Marsh Lakers must deal with the reality of living in a forest zone where fire is to be expected from time-to-time.

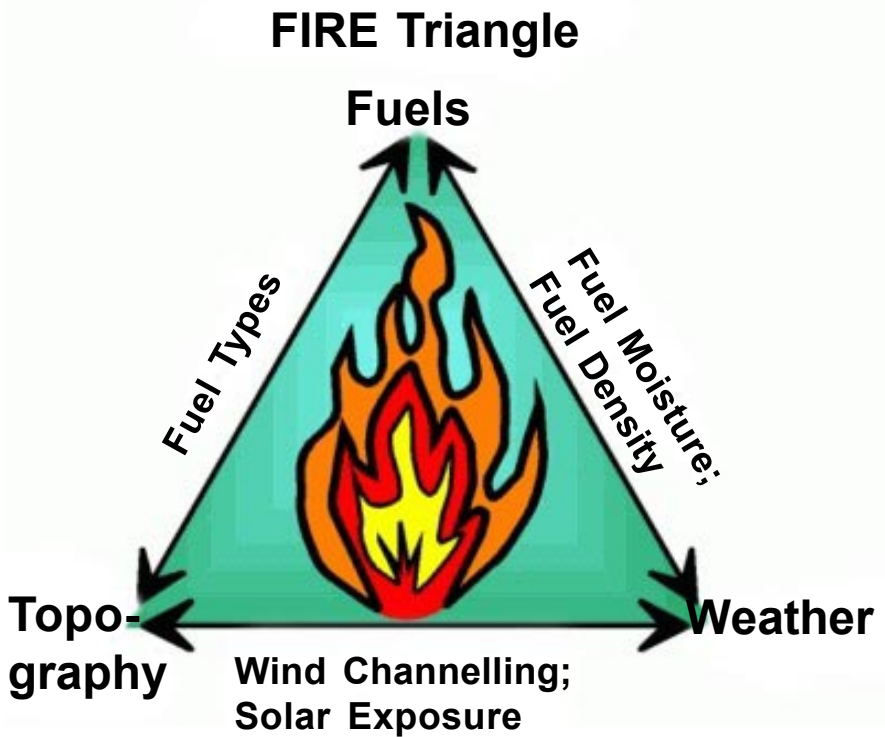
The risk is there – and so too is the ability and know-how to decrease the risk (to some degree) with knowledge, motivation and resourcefulness.

To quote English novelist Thomas Hardy's apt words: *"If a path to the better there be, it begins with a full look at the worst."*

We must open our eyes, understand the phenomenon and meet this challenge head-on, and do our bit.

We look forward to seeing you at the public meeting May 7<sup>th</sup> at the Firehall.

For more details call 660-4121.



The sides of a triangle are used to represent the three factors (oxygen, heat, fuel) necessary for combustion and flame production. If you remove any of the three factors flame production ceases.

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## Some Wildfire Fuel Definitions

**Combustible material:** includes, vegetation, such as grass, leaves, ground litter, plants, shrubs and trees, that feed a fire. (See Surface Fuels.)

**Ground Fuel:** all combustible materials below the surface litter, including duff, tree or shrub roots, punchy wood, peat, and sawdust, that normally support a glowing combustion without flame.

**Surface Fuels:** loose surface litter on the soil surface, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches that have not

yet decayed enough to lose their identity; also grasses, low and medium shrubs, tree seedlings, heavier branchwood, downed logs, and stumps interspersed with or partially replacing the litter.

**Ladder Fuels:** fuels which provide vertical continuity between strata, thereby allowing fire to carry from surface fuels into the crowns of trees or shrubs with relative ease.

# Sprinkler Systems to Protect your Home from Wildfire

MLFR Fire Chief Juergen Willms

One tool that seems to be gaining more and more importance when it comes to overall community and individual dwelling protection against the dangers of wildfire is OUTSIDE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS.

It is amazing how little water you actually need to prevent a fire from igniting compared to how much you need to put it out.

Although Wildland Fire, a component of YTG's Department of Protective Services, is putting together big sprinkler units driven by 4" power pumps serving up to 25 sprinkler heads, the importance of individual smaller systems is not to be underestimated.

**"These embers, depending on the intensity of the fire, will not only fall out of the sky, they will approach your house horizontally in very large numbers like a blizzard..."**

A full-blown wild fire will expose homes and people to two major threats:

1. To be over-rolled by a fast traveling fire front which most likely will ignite your home by radiant heat from burning trees or burning close-by structures;
2. By the tremendous amount of embers or firebrands a large wild fire will produce. These embers will travel a long way ahead of the fire, find unignited fuels and present us with spontaneous spot fires. These embers, depending on the intensity of the fire, will not only fall out of the sky, they will approach your house horizontally in very large numbers like a blizzard. For example, one square metre of pool tarp in B.C. was burned by over a thousand of those embers). If conditions suit it, embers will bombard your house en

masse, swirling in every direction, finding their way into your house; that is, if you don't take adequate precautions!

After FireSmarting (see the article on page 8) your house and property and after closing all existing openings, deploying a sprinkler system will decrease the chance that these embers will find available dry fuel and light your house or property on fire.

By wetting down the surrounding area, including roof, deck(s), eaves, etc., in overlaying patterns prior to the arrival of a raging firestorm, the survival chances of your home increases dramatically.

Sprinkler systems can be driven by gas-powered or electric pumps. Depending on the size, elevation, and water availability, the ideal system will cover your roof and all surrounding sides of your home.

The cost of such units can be high, so perhaps it's a good idea to talk to your neighbor about sharing some equipment. Some pumps are large enough to ensure the safety of more than one property and sharing reduces the cost and promotes mutual self-interest.

Of course, as with all mechanical equipment, disadvantages and problems exist. All mechanical equipment is susceptible to failure, to limited running times due to fuel capacity, or the possibility of quitting completely in the case you are using your well pump during a power outage.

An approach that may work to deal with these issues is to rig a generator into your house system to keep the well pump running in case of a power outage (Note: make sure to watch for wiring regulations with generator use for your house). Generators usually have to be manually activated, so there

might be a problem if nobody is at home to start it.

If you are interested in protecting your home with a sprinkler system, come and talk to us.

The meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> is the great chance to learn more about personal home sprinkler systems by talking to industry reps and fire-service professionals.

We've spent time this long winter researching the subject and would be more than happy to help you in any way we can. If you have a home sprinkler system already, Marsh Lake Fire Rescue would like to include your sprinkler set up information in Marsh Lake Fire Survey (see the article on page 5). Maybe we can assist and turn it on and maintain it for you, if you are not around.

## Sprinkler systems at work during a wildfire



# BE SMART... FIRESMART!

**FireSmart** is a program designed to help reduce the risk of life and property loss from wildfire. This is achieved largely from fuel reduction (i.e. clearing and/or burning deadfall, and thinning out the forest)

There are two types of FireSmart programmes: the first, dealing with Crown/YTG land in which community groups, municipal governments, First Nations and school councils apply, and the Territorial Government pays up (phone 456-3901 for more details); and the second, where the onus is on the homeowner to do the work to “fire-smart” the property.

For our purposes, we’ll just touch on the second type: FireSmarting your property.

## **REMEMBER: IT IS UP TO YOU TO FIRESMART YOUR PROPERTY!**

One part of the FireSmart Programme divides the property into Priority Zones. Think of the first 10 metres (roughly 30 feet) around your home as the First Priority Zone. Keep this zone free of fuel (see definition on page 5) as best as you can. Remove shrubs and deadfall, relocate woodpiles, down trees, and have your grass mowed and watered. Remember that propane and other fuel tanks near the house are potentially dangerous.

The Second Priority Zone extends from 10 metres from the house to 30 metres. In this zone, the concept is still the same: reduce fuel-load, but the measures are less extreme. In the Second Priority Zone, cut trees to maintain a distance of 3 metres so that crowns (the top) do not touch or overlap. This measure gives you the firewood you need and, in the long run, helps to grow thicker, stronger trees.

When selecting trees to cut in this zone, particularly remove the coniferous/ev-

ergreen types (e.g. spruce, pine) as these types are more combustible than deciduous trees like poplars. Prune branches within 2.5 metres of the ground to prevent horizontal fire spread. Also, remove all deadfall – these dried-out dead trees, especially spruce and pine, are loaded with fuel and burn fast and hot.

Remember the wildfire triangle (see illustration on page 5): topography is a major factor in wildfire spread. Fire, like water, tends to follow the path of least resistance. Make sure to extend the above principles to your land further on downhill slopes as fire tends to move faster uphill than down.

The Third Priority Zone extends 30 metres from the home to 100 metres and beyond. In this zone, one needn’t remove all fuels but thin trees (but keep the deciduous trees like poplars that retain more moisture and burn slower), reduce shrubs and deadfall, and trim the tree canopy.

FireSmart also looks at other factors that mitigate fire risks, including structural features of the home. If you are building a home or renovating, consider using the following for fire protection:

Fire resistant roofing like asphalt and metal are much better than cedar shake or shingles for resisting flying embers (that can travel 1 km or more)

Non-combustible siding like brick, metal or concrete (log is better than wood and vinyl siding)

Reduce areas that offer hiding places from airborne sparks or embers (e.g. soffits, eaves, chimney – closed or screened are better than open. Chimneys should be screened in with approved spark arrestors) Tempered glass is the best.

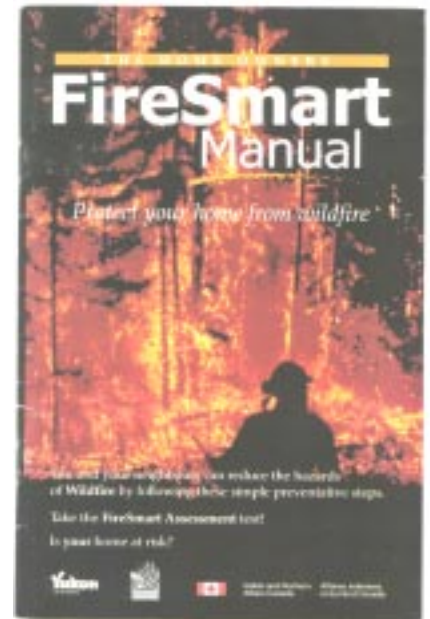
Double or thermal-paned is better than single-paned windows.

Clear vegetation around propane tanks, other fuel supplies and powerlines (but exercise extreme caution around powerlines.)

Keep tools on hand. Sprinklers are talked about in length in this newsletter. Have a garden hose ready, or better still, a 1.5 inch fire line hooked up to a pump. A generator is handy (what happens if the power is cut?). Shovels, rakes and axes can be very useful. And a roof ladder can help in the event that embers hit the roof.

Check your roads and driveways. Can you get out quickly? Is your access wide enough for firefighting equipment or a neighbour to get in? Is your lot clearly numbered so firefighters can get to you and your property in a timely fashion. It’s a lot to digest, but there’s help.

## **DON’T DO IT ALONE - MARSH LAKE FIRE RESCUE IS THERE TO HELP WITH THE MARSH LAKE SURVEY!**



Copies of the above FireSmart manual will be available to the public at the special Meeting on May 7th at the fire-hall.

# MARSH LAKE SURVEY

## PREPARING FOR THE WORST, PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The MARSH LAKE SURVEY – a three-part assessment comprised of Wildfire Hazard Assessment, Property Survey, and Resident Survey – is COMING! Sign up at the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting or call Fire Chief Juergen Willms at 660-4121 for an appointment.

Members of Marsh Lake Fire Rescue have been trained recently to assess home properties and fire risk there in. Over the course of the spring and summer, trained responders will be assessing homes and gathering information on issues like:

Site hazards (vegetation, lay of the land, etc.)

Resident information (pets and people in the home that will aid us in the event of an evacuation, etc.)

Property survey (chimney, location of woodpiles, fuel sources, access issues, etc.)

The Marsh Lake Survey benefits the community in two ways: first, you – the homeowner – get valuable advice on how to make your home and surroundings safer fire-wise; second, Marsh Lake Fire Rescue – the first responders in our community – get information that in the event of an emergency, might help them to do a better job of protecting life, saving pets and salvaging/saving your property. Information gathered is completely CONFIDENTIAL – we're all neighbours after all!

Call today to book an appointment. And if not, we'll be calling you soon – this assessment is perhaps the most important part of a wildfire safety plan.



### FireSmart Assessment Training

Part of the team, left to right: Blair checks the coordinates on his GPS, and Jurgen scribbles notes with pen and pencil while Mike prefers to use a high tech computer tablet.

# Home Insurance and Wildfire

By Dennis Levy

Anyone who has had the unfortunate experience of having a fire in their home knows what a devastating experience it can be. One has just to look back at the people in Kelowna who lost their homes and what they went through when their homes were destroyed as the result of the wildfire in 2003.

Insurance policies cover the homeowner for a number of named "Perils". Fire is just one and is defined as one that starts from a hostile environment. For example, to have a fire in your fireplace would not be considered a hostile environment; one would expect to have a fire in a fireplace. However if a log rolls out of the fireplace onto the carpet and burns the carpet, that would be considered a hostile environment as one does not expect to have a fire on the carpet. If your home is damaged or destroyed by a wildfire that is considered a hostile environment. In short "Fire is Fire" regardless of how it is ignited and with the exception of Arson would normally be covered by a current existing insurance policy.

As important as it is to ensure that you have a policy that is "current" is to ensure that you have adequate coverage on your home and your possessions. Everyone should consult with their agent as policies may differ with insurance agencies.

Most policies offer replacement cost on your home. For instance if your home is insured to a value of \$200,000.00 and is destroyed by fire and it costs \$225,000.00 to replace your home most insurance companies will cover that additional cost as long as the home is insured to 80% of the value of the dwelling (this % may vary with various insurance companies). You should check with your insurance company and find out what their requirements

Cont. on page 12

## Some Scary Pictures





## Editor's Corner

### FIRE INSURANCE from page 9

for replacement cost insurance are, and whether you qualify.

Secondly, you should do an inventory of the contents of your home. The amount of insurance you have on your contents is usually a percentage of the amount of insurance you have on your dwelling. You would normally have replacement cost on your contents up to policy limits. Therefore if you have policy limits of \$100,000.00 on your contents and as the result of a fire your loss is \$125,000.00 you will not get more than what you policy limits are. Again this may vary with insurance companies and you should check with your agent to see the wording of your policy.

Keeping an up to date inventory can be a time consuming chore but if you are ever in the unfortunate position to be involved in a home fire - whether a total or partial loss - you will be required to write every item loss on what is called a "Schedule of Loss Form." This can be a very time consuming experience and sometimes frustrating.

Sit in your kitchen and try and write down every item in your living room and see how much you miss.

By doing an inventory you may find your contents exceed the limits of your policy and you may consider topping up your contents limits to adequately cover all your contents. Take some time and take pictures, video your contents, or take the time to do a written inventory and store in a safe place outside the home.

*Please, Please* take the time to check your insurance policy, speak to your agent as policies will vary with insurance agents. Going through a fire of any kind is a very stressful experience and by taking a few steps you may reduce this unpleasant time.

Editor-in-Chief's Note: if you have any questions about fire insurance, Dennis Levy will be on hand to answer questions at the Public Meeting on May 7th. (See page 16).

### Fire photo

In order to grab your attention about the importance of emergency planning I decided that a front cover photograph that looked as though a real wildfire had taken place in Marsh Lake might help to reinforce your opinion about the importance of fire safety. I showed the proposed cover to several people and a common reaction was "Ooo... that's scary." Somebody else said "When the hell did that happen?"

Special thanks to Tilly McDonald for allowing me to use a photo I took of her business premises. She agreed that a fake photo would obviously be better than me setting the forest on fire in order to take real photos! I painted the flames and smoke into the photo using Photoshop and PhotoStudio software.

I apologize if the photograph frightened anyone but I felt it was necessary to add a fear factor in order to drive the message home by making it appear as realistic as possible. On the other hand, maybe I shouldn't apologize if it encourages people to do something about fire hazards on their property or to follow many other suggestions you'll find throughout this newsletter, then the photograph did what it was supposed to do.

A few years ago my wife and I decided to remove all tall trees on our property that were close to our cabin, not because we were concerned about wildfires but because heavy winds had wrecked a garden shed, a dog run (and almost killed the dog), nearly broke the skylight on our roof, and narrowly missed several items of value.

When we did decide to FireSmart our property there was less work to do. We removed all the dead twigs and small branches from the bottom 2 metres of most of the trees on our property, and removed as much ground fuel as pos-

sible; deadfall, needles and cones, and so on. We also created fuel free areas around the house by removing all combustible items, including fire wood, to a safer distance. We still have more to do, but most of the major work is completed.

Our cabin is now surrounded on all sides by grass, which grew very quickly after the spruce trees were removed, and we have many new willow bushes which have grown in spots where trees were removed.

Our privacy is more or less intact because we still have all the greenbelt trees on two sides of our property. Unfortunately that area is loaded with ground fuel. Maybe some day it too will be *FireSmarted*.

Finally, a point worth mentioning: when you FireSmart *your* property you are also lessening the risk of a fire spreading to your *neighbour's* property. Which, hopefully, your neighbour will appreciate.

Rob Alexander  
Editor-in-Chief, Marsh Lake News.

### Special Edition in Colour

**You can view this Special Edition of Marsh Lake News in colour at the following website**

**[www.marshlakeyukon.net](http://www.marshlakeyukon.net)**

**If you do not have a program on your computer that views PDF files you can download a free copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader from the same site.**

# Burning Permits

If you plan to burn grass, brush or debris anytime between April 1st and September 30th in the Yukon, you will need to obtain a Burning Permit.

Burning Permits are required for all PUBLIC and PRIVATE lands.

Permits are free of charge and may be obtained from your local Wildland Fire Management.

An onsite inspection might be required prior to issuing the permit . Please contact Marsh Lake Fire Rescue prior to burning. (A contact phone number should be on your permit).

For more information, call:

**867-456-3877**

[www.community.gov.yk./ca/firemanagement/prm.html](http://www.community.gov.yk./ca/firemanagement/prm.html)

Report all wildfires

**1-888-798-FIRE (3473)**

**in the Marsh Lake area call 911  
for wildfire reporting**

Above information printed by permission of Wildland Fire Management



# Evacuation

## What would you do if you had to evacuate?

After reading this article, we hope that in the event of an emergency in Marsh Lake, you will be more prepared to handle an evacuation.

There are many different types of events that could force you to evacuate your home. The most likely is a forest fire, but we shouldn't forget other reasons for evacuations, such as a hazardous material accident (we all live close to a major highway), or prolonged power outages (which could be a result of ice or wind storms, or earthquake).

In some cases you may have hours or even days to prepare, in others, you have just minutes. Our goal, as your Fire Rescue Department, is to make sure you can help yourself and therefore help us try to keep our neighbours safe from harm. With that in mind, this article will explain the resources available to you in the Yukon and provide helpful checklists to help you prepare.

There are four stages of an evacuation:

- 1) pre-event planning
- 2) when an evacuation is called
- 3) during the evacuation
- 4) returning home.

We recommend that you and your family take the time now to plan for an evacuation, and understand what will happen when one is needed, so that you know what to expect.

### Pre-Event Planning.

It would be wise to have the following "bug out kit" either packed in your vehicle or within quick access at home.

We have created this list from various sources, and it is intended as a guideline for you to use. Use common sense and look at your own needs, but be prepared.

- . First Aid Kit.
- . A minimum of one week's supply of all medications for each individual.
- . 10 litres (2.5 gallons) of water per person.
- . A minimum of two day's supply of dried or canned food and other dietary needs: A simple camping style cook kit.
- . A full change of functional and practical clothing for the season.
- . Toys and books for the kids.
- . A radio with backup batteries.
- . Easy and simple access should be planned for important documents such as passports, birth certificates, house deeds, insurance policies, and any other documents you deem essential.
- . Many of us have pets we care about dearly. Food and water should be packed for them also. Practical things like dog leashes and transport cages should be included. Facilities may be provided for pets after evacuation, but you should have a backup plan for pets. If you have large animals (horses, etc) plan where you can take them for safety.

Also, prior to an evacuation you should prepare your family.

- . Talk with your family about potential emergencies and how to respond to each.

. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.

. Know how to locate your children and their school's protocol for evacuation.

. Plan how your family would stay in contact if you were separated from one another in a disaster. Identify two meeting places. The first should be a place near your home

- in case of fire; perhaps a tree or a telephone pole; the second should be a place away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.

. Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for family members to call to say they are okay.

. Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.

. Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.

. Show responsible persons in your household how and when to shut-off water, oil and electricity at the main breaker panel.

. Take a Red Cross first aid and CPR class.

. Consider how you would help your neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or people with disabilities.

. Consider how you can protect your property from fire (sprinklers are useful suggestions)

### When an Evacuation is Called

When an evacuation is needed, MLFR and the RCMP will make every attempt to con-

# Evacuation

tact you. This may be a telephone call or an Emergency vehicle driving through your neighbourhood. Please follow all the directions they provide. Information might include which direction it is safe to drive in (i.e. north or south), how much time you have to safely evacuate, and where a shelter is set up. The radio stations in Whitehorse and Tagish may also be providing information. In the event there is several days notice to evacuate, an 800# might be set up for information.

Before leaving your home:

. It is also essential to shut of the flow of oil or propane into your home from the outside tank.

. If time permits, cover your freezer with blankets to keep the contents frozen longer in case the power is disconnected.

. Gather water, food, clothing and the other items from your emergency checklist.

. Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.

Secure your home. Close and lock doors and windows. Unplug appliances. Take any actions needed to prevent damage to water pipes by freezing weather if this is a threat.

. Turn off the main water and oil valves and electricity (at main breaker), if instructed to do so.

. If a fire is threatening, turn on your sprinklers.

. Let others know where you are going.

. Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather or traffic.

. Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take short cuts, they may be blocked. Be alert for washed-out roadways and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas. Stay away from downed power lines. Drive defensively.

. Go to the designated Evacuation Centre that will be set up by the EMO (Emergency Measures Office)

## During the Evacuation

Members of Marsh Lake Fire Rescue, other volunteer agencies, the EMO, the RCMP and perhaps Wildlands Fire will be doing everything possible to protect the residents and property in Marsh Lake. Please follow their instructions. It is also very important that you register at the EMO Evacuation Centre, even if you are not planning on staying there. First - it lets other people know that you are safe and where you are. This can be very important in helping to reunite families. Second, it assures you access to all the financial and other services provided - such as hotel room fees, food, and clothing costs. *If you don't register you will not be able to apply for the cost of those items later.*

## Returning Home

Follow instructions on when it is safe for you to return to your home. Returning too early may endanger both yourself and the responders. They will not expect you to be there or be prepared to help you if you encounter a problem. Once the threat is over, we hope the community will unite to help their neighbours and return to the best com-

munity in the Yukon, (or was it in Canada? Hmm.. North America? I forget..)

Many thanks to those providing the above information including: Irv Harper MLFR, Ron Adams EMO, Brian Kitchen Emergency Human Services, Office of Emergency Preparedness, Lafayette, Louisiana, and U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

And finally - plan to attend any public meetings, and review the Disaster Plan prepared by Marsh Lake Fire Rescue.

**If you have any questions related to the various subjects covered in this newsletter please contact the following people:**

**Juergen Willms - 660-4121  
Mike Larsen - 660-4600**

# **WILDFIRE...**

**What will YOU do when the S\*\*T hits the fan?**

**GET WISE – GET ORGANIZED !**

Plan on attending the  
**PUBLIC MEETING**  
**PERSONAL & HOME PROTECTION WORKSHOP**

**Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
**Marsh Lake Firehall**  
**Judas Creek Subdivision, Marsh Lake**

**2 THREE-HOUR SESSIONS:**  
**10am to 1pm**  
**OR**  
**2:30pm to 5:30pm**  
**if you can't make the morning session**

## **AGENDA**

### **Hour 1 includes:**

Presentation on fire risk and wildfire concepts  
Wildfire projections for Marsh Lake – *“What could happen in our community given today's reality”*

### **Hour 2 includes:**

Home and Personal Protection (FireSmart, sprinklers, Marsh Lake Survey)  
Presentation of the Evacuation Plan for Marsh Lake  
Panel Presentation by representative of the Protective Services, Emergency Measures Office, plus representatives from fire protection business (sprinklers, generators, extinguishers, pumps)

### **Hour 3 includes:**

Free coffee and snacks  
A chance to mingle, meet and greet folks from government, industry, and Marsh Lake Fire Rescue. Plus get hand outs on sprinklers, FireSmart, etc.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL FIRE CHIEF JUERGEN WILLMS @ 660-4121**

**THREE HOURS 'DAMN WELL SPENT'**