

GTEC Green Technology
Education Centre

Wildfire and Smoke Preparation Kit

The GTEC Wildfire and Smoke Preparation Kit

Purpose

The increasing incidence and intensity of wildfires and the smoke associated with wildfires is a predictable outcome of a warming climate.

The purpose of the GTEC Wildfire and Smoke Preparation Kit is to provide useful materials to organizations in the community social services and health care sectors as they either currently face or anticipate facing wildfires and smoke. It was initially developed in conjunction with the Federation of Community Social Services of BC.



Contents

The GTEC Wildfire and Smoke Preparation Kit contains:

- A link to a video that GTEC produced this spring called ***Preparing Your Organization for the 2025 Fire Season*** - <https://youtu.be/G6ztjqOLgAU>. This video includes interviews with a Fire Ecologist, an Executive Director whose organization was recently threatened with evacuation and an expert in public health whose family experienced evacuation. A printable pdf providing organizations with a brief **Organization Checklist and Preparation Plan** is included in this document.
- A link to a GTEC video of an **interview with Dr. Linda Thyer** outlining the health impacts of wildfire smoke and the precautionary measures individual and organizations can take – <https://youtu.be/RZpWDzhngwE>
- A link to a GTEC video of an **interview with Dr. Anne-Marie Nicol** who has developed and tested a Do-It-Yourself air filtration system. The interview includes instructions on how to build these low cost alternatives to commercially available air filtration systems – <https://youtu.be/Dy0EMsrsKZ8>

This is a link to the very helpful [BC Wildfire site](#).

Wildfire/Toxic Smoke Emergency Checklist

- 1. **Activate the organization's emergency plan** (based on the type and level of emergency).
- 2. **Inform all staff, volunteers and board** that a wildfire and toxic smoke emergency is taking place.
- 3. **Inform all clients** that a wildfire and toxic smoke emergency is taking place and that a pause in regular services and operating hours is occurring and what services the organization is making available during the emergency.
- 4. **Link all staff, volunteers, board and clients to reliable sources of information** about the emergency.
- 5. **Communicate sources of ongoing information** about the emergency such as community-based emergency centres, as well as the location of clean air and cooling centres.
- 6. **Establish daily checkpoint** with staff online and/or in person depending on conditions
- 7. **Minimize fire hazards** relating to buildings, equipment and records.
- 8. **Implement a plan to protect facilities, equipment and confidential records**
- 9. In the case of evacuation, **establish an alternative source of information** about the organization.
- 10. After the wildfire event, **de-brief staff and update fire season preparation plan**

Organization Fire Season Preparation Plan



1. Convening a Team:

- Form an Interim Team with a specific mandate to plan the organization's response to the upcoming fire season
- Define roles and responsibilities and reporting structure within the Team and between the Team and the larger organization
- Hold an initial meeting to introduce the concept and establish initial goals and objectives

Outcome: A cohesive team with defined roles and responsibilities and initial goals and objectives ready to plan the organization's response to the fire season



Organization Fire Season Preparation Plan



2. Assessing the Organization's Current Level of Preparation:

- Identify the 3-5 most probable scenarios the organization will face during 2025 fire season based on the organization's previous experience, sources of data such as BC Climate Vulnerability Map - <https://mhcca.ca/climate-vulnerability> and the organization's current risk assessment data. Scenarios identify level and type of emergency.
- Assess the risks relating to the organization (staff, facilities and equipment), the people that it serves and its community associated with each scenario
- Identify staff, service recipient and community equity-seeking groups for whom special arrangements need to be made
- Develop a communication plan and assure that an emergency contact list is in place
- Identify and assign priorities to gaps and areas in the need of further development

Outcome: Comprehensive understanding of the organization's current level of resilience including potential areas for development.

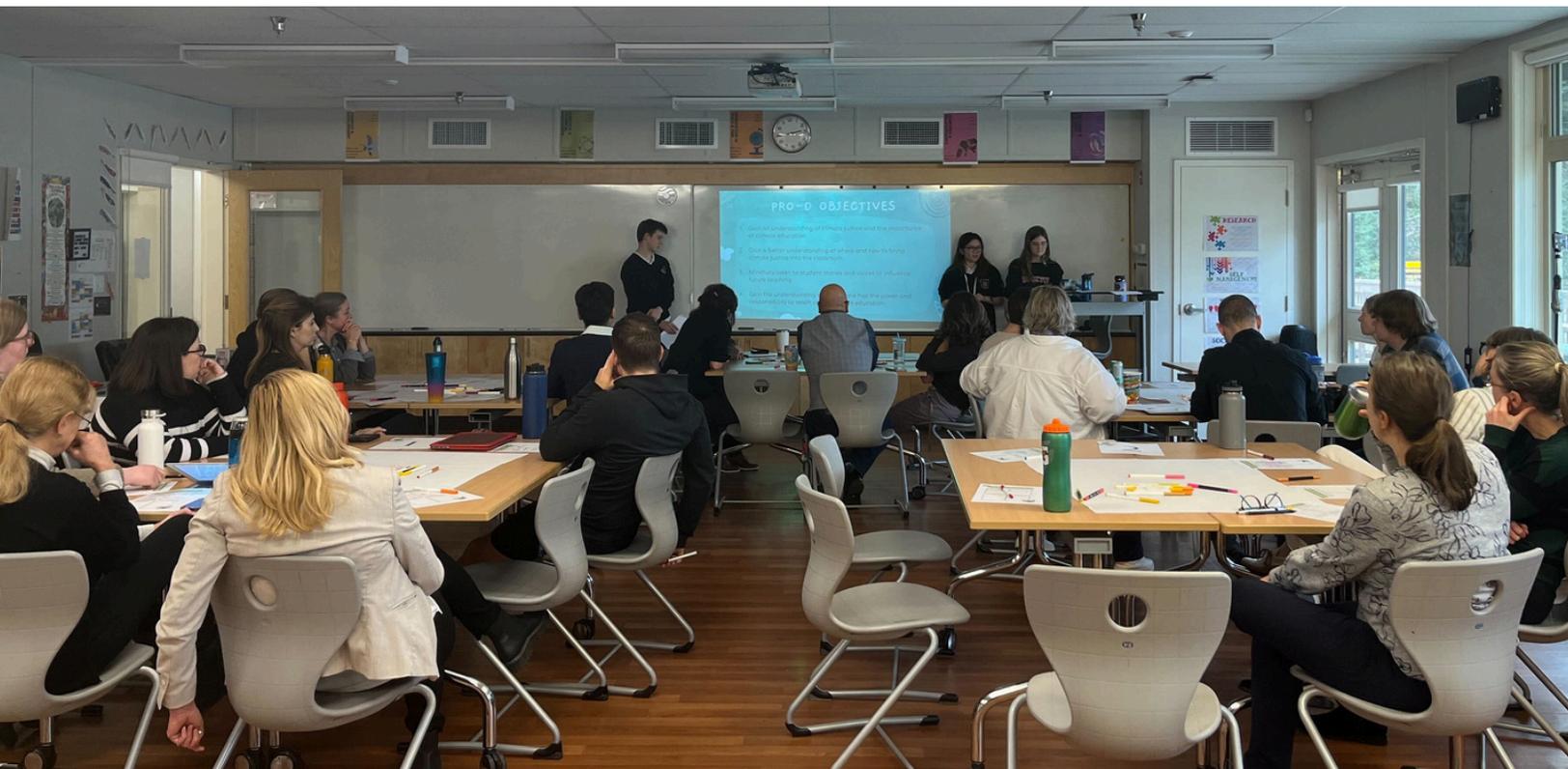
Organization Fire Season Preparation Plan



3. Identifying Community Partners:

- Reach out to potential partners (other organizations, government agencies, etc.) including liaison with professional federations and associations. This may include one or more of BC's existing environment organizations.
- Organize stakeholder meetings or workshops to discuss collaboration opportunities.
- Establish formal partnerships or collaborative networks

Outcome: Established partnerships and networks for resource sharing and coordinated response.



Organization Fire Season Preparation Plan



4. Fire Season Preparation Plan:

- Develop a detailed plan with specific actions.
- Establish protocols and procedures for both ongoing development and emergency response
- Communicate out to the organization and, where appropriate, the community
- Provide staff training and capacity-building initiatives

Outcome: Comprehensive plan and staff ready for effective implementation



Predicting Wildfire Events

The more they research climate change events the more scientists realize how unpredictable such events are. However, fire ecologist, Bob Gray tells us that long lasting high pressure systems (3 days or longer) in the spring months (March, April & May) make it more likely that extended high pressure systems later in the summer will create high risk conditions for fire. All it takes is ignition.



Where There is Fire, There is Smoke

In addition to the risks associated with wildfire itself smoke from fires is a health threatening event, especially to vulnerable populations such as young children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. When a wildfire becomes an *interface fire* that burns houses and cars as well as the forest smoke becomes increasingly carcinogenic. Different levels of risk are associated with different levels of smoke and require different preventative measures.



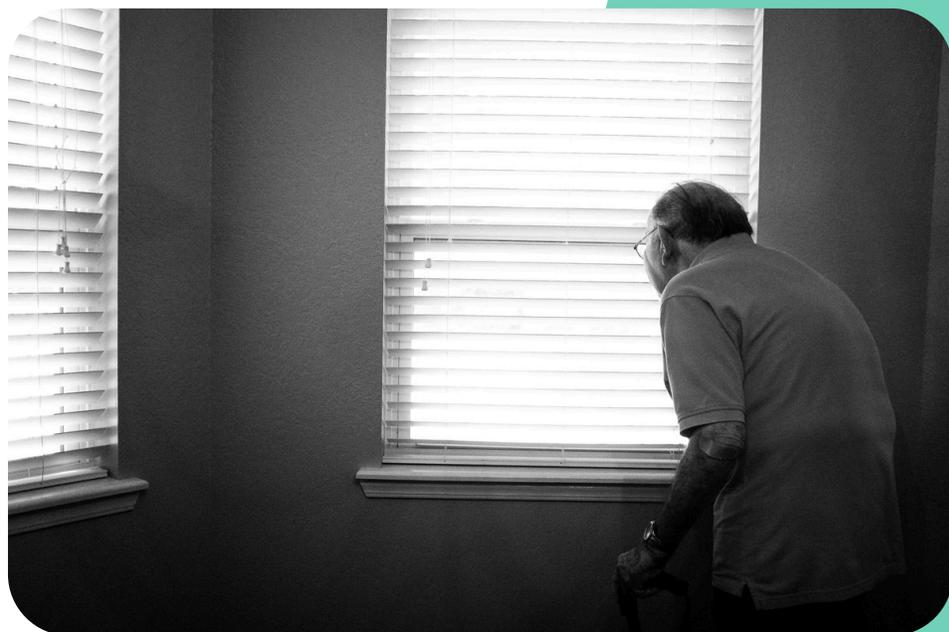
Evacuation

Some communities will face evacuation. It is essential that community members have a *go bag* for evacuation purposes and know both egress routes and destinations. People need to plan for pets and livestock. Communities need a plan for institutional settings, vulnerable populations and those with limited capacities due to factors such as poverty and disability.



Mental Health

Wildfire, toxic smoke and especially evacuation often result in trauma and other psychological effects. During evacuation people are often separated from the family and community networks that provide them with emotional support. Although it seems that when the fire is put out and smoke cleared that the event is over, but the psychological aftereffects can last for long periods of time.



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