

WILD FIRE PREPAREDNESS

MAY 8, 2025

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
OUTLOOK

Power in preparation

The reports began trickling in on an eerie evening in July 2024 that were unwanted, but there was a gut feeling it was inevitable.

It had first seemed like a fire drill at elementary school; more a formality of following safety steps than an actual emergency, said Ray Schmidt.

Working as a Parks Canada human-wildlife conflict officer, a quiet evening with his partner at their home turned into a nighttime evacuation, with an ominous glow in the sky moving toward the town.

People were patient as they left the town by car on the only road out of town. Had they known what was about to happen then maybe things would have been different.

"You don't see fire around here; it didn't quite hit home for me," said Schmidt.

Schmidt remained in Jasper 30 minutes before the raging wildfire breached town two days later, destroying one-third of the mountain community's businesses and homes.

In many ways, Jasper represents every town: surrounded by mature forest and vulnerable to fire.

Schmidt, who is also a singer-songwriter and guitarist in The Wardens, lived in Canmore for 17 years before Jasper. He has thought about fire hitting the mountainous area for a long time. He says a "mentality shift" about living in wildfire-susceptible communities, like the Bow Valley, is needed from residents.

"Jasper proves things have changed and ... We're living in a changed world," said Schmidt.

Although many proactive approaches to reduce wildfire risks within the mountain communities are ongoing.

Canmore Fire-Rescue is hosting an open house for Bow Valley Wildfire and Emergency Preparedness Day on Saturday (May 10), from 1-4 p.m. at its new location on Palliser Trail. It's an opportunity for the community to ask questions to the Town of Canmore, Town of Banff, MD of Bighorn, Parks Canada, Alberta Wildfire, Alberta Parks, and the RCMP, but also a chance to talk to residents.

Canmore Fire-Rescue is on pace this summer to complete more than 200 free individual FireSmart home assessments, in which a trained member visits a property and reviews fire risk hazards to home exteriors with clear recommendations on moving forward.

The more prepared residents are, the better.

"If every resident in town can follow the recommended FireSmart guidelines, we're much better off."

KERI MARTENS
Banff Fire Chief

"We're all in this together," said Canmore Fire-Rescue's deputy chief Michael Bourgon.

"Our firefighters are going to be fighting the fire, so the more that you can do as residents now to help us, the better off we're going to be and the more successful we'll be."

One thing Bow Valley communities want to see is neighbourhood committees and Community Champions to coordinate a FireSmart activity tailored specifically to their neighbourhood like vegetation management, deadfall removal, safe landscaping practices, and potential structural improvements.

The more residents are involved, the better.

Fire in the sky

With the smell of burning wood in the breeze and grey ash floating down from cloudy sky, the Verdant Creek fire crept closer to Banff in 2017. About 24 kilometres from the town as the crow flies, the giant wildfire threatened to jump into the Bow Valley.

Fortunately, the fire couldn't hurdle the mountains in the west, but it was at the mountain resort town's doorstep. However, what could have very easily been burning embers raining down on the tourist town, the Banff Fire Department encourages every resident to take a look at the FireSmart recommendations and then hard look at their properties.

Katherine Severson, Banff's director of emergency management and protective services, said what is often recognized in the emergency management community is that climate-related disasters have been significantly increasing year over year for many years now.

The Town of Banff has worked on vegetation management for more than 20 years on roughly 80 hectares around the town boundary.

"The big change in this past year was we were able to take a look at the Town of Banff infrastructure and focus on removing some of the trees and some of the hazards ... and really take our FireSmart principles to heart on our own facilities because we can't



Lessons from the Jasper wildfire.

FIRESMART™

expect our residents to FireSmart their own properties if we as a municipality aren't doing the same thing," said Severson.

If every resident in town can follow the recommended FireSmart guidelines, Banff fire chief Keri Martens said "we're much better off."

"They have a responsibility in this fight, too," said Martens. "We really need neighbourhoods to engage in this and we need residents to talk over their fences and have these conversations and say, 'I'm going to clean up this weekend, do you want to join me?'"

"We know people are concerned, and Jasper, in particular, impacted the residents of the Bow Valley, and we're concerned, too. That's why we are doing this work and that's why we've been working so hard to do this work for so long."

When hellfire hit Jasper

"I was like, 'OK, our house is gone' and I didn't know the situation and I was working," said Schmidt. "That's a pretty tricky balancing act emotionally."

With invaluable experience working with wildfires, Schmidt wore many hats leading up to the fateful day when flames breached Jasper.

Schmidt went from boots-on-the-ground incident response for Parks Canada in Jasper to an incident command team for planning. He was based out of Hinton, about 77 kilometres away, after wildfire forced first responders out of the area.

Schmidt believed the massive menace approaching would turn away at the last second and miss town. Kind

of a wiping sweat from the brow moment. But by July 24, two days after the evacuation order, pictures started coming into the command station of the Maligne Lodge ablaze, then the fingers of the flames reached town.

While directing fire crews from across Alberta, Schmidt knew that the side of town where he and his partner made a home was on fire.

"All I cared was that my sweetheart was going to get out of town, my instruments were going to get out of town and our hats. Nothing really matters at that point, it's just stuff," Schmidt said.

Schmidt's home was spared in the devastating blaze that caused more than \$1 billion in damage and saw about 2,000 people lose their homes. Looking around at the aftermath, Schmidt carries a strong ache "survivor's guilt" on his shoulders.

"A bunch of friends' homes burned, so that was hugely emotional, then when I found out mine didn't, it was also hugely emotional," he said.

Thinking back on his time in the Bow Valley and then Jasper, Schmidt said they are different, but really the same thing when it comes to wildfire vulnerability.

"It's probably not an if, it's a when," he said.

**Wildfire First Responders,
And Town Staff Can Answering
Questions At An Emergency
Preparedness Open House**

**Saturday, May 10
1:00-4:00 p.m.**

at Canmore Fire Station



Beth Sanders is Jasper's director of urban design and standards.

PETER SHOEKIR JASPER FITZHUGH

Jasper's updated rules ensure new buildings are wildfire resilient

PETER SHOEKIR, JASPER FITZHUGH

JASPER – After losing 358 structures in last summer's wildfire, Jasper is planning to rebuild in a way that keeps FireSmart top of mind.

Last fall, Jasper's land-use policy and architectural motif were updated to improve the wildfire resilience of new buildings.

"Typically, in building codes, they think about a fire starting inside a building and keeping it from moving to other parts of a building, but FireSmart is really thinking about when the fire comes from outside and a building igniting, and we want to minimize the opportunities for a building to ignite," said Beth Sanders, the Municipality of Jasper's director of urban design and standards.

According to Jasper's rebuilding guide, new wood siding or roofing is prohibited, including cedar shakes. Homes are required to have a 1.5-metre buffer zone of non-flammable materials, and new coniferous trees must be planted at least 10 metres away from a building.

The new rules ensure structures are minimally at risk when wildfire embers are falling on them or nearby, which is how many buildings in Jasper caught fire last summer.

Parks Canada, which has land-use authority but is in the process of transferring it to the municipality, made these changes soon after the wildfire so leaseholders could immediately start planning their rebuild.

Sanders noted that other at-risk communities were interested in implementing similar building restrictions, although some with a lower risk of wildfire may choose to be less aggressive in their policies.

"We can be sure that Banff, Canmore, Valemount, all sorts of B.C. communities that are in the forest are paying attention to what can happen when there's fire near a town," Sanders said.

Jasper officials are not considering any further FireSmart rules, nor will they force leaseholders to upgrade existing buildings, the exception being if they wanted to renovate their building.

"Just to use the example of cedar shingles, we can't require somebody to switch them, though if they are changing their roofing materials and they need a permit from Parks. Right now, Parks is going to be looking for a material that's noncombustible," Sanders said.

RULES

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

FIELD LAW

LEGALLY SPEAKING

Are You Prepared for Wildfire Season?

Canmore-based lawyer, Austin Ward, sat down with Carolyn Paterson to discuss the legal considerations of wildfire preparedness in the Bow Valley and how homeowners, businesses, and municipalities can mitigate risk.

Why is wildfire preparedness a legal issue in the Bow Valley?

Canmore is within Alberta's designated Forest Protection Area with corresponding requirements for wildfire prevention, detection and suppression. Additionally, as wildfires are a growing concern in the region, knowledge and awareness of legal responsibilities when it comes to mitigating fire risk is very important. Municipal bylaws, zoning regulations, and provincial laws all play a role in fire prevention and emergency response. Businesses and homeowners must understand their obligations and take proactive steps to ensure compliance.

What obligations do we have to reduce wildfire risk?

Canmore is a fire-smart community, with roofing material requirements for new builds, fire inspection requirements for businesses that meet prescribed criteria, and permit requirements for burning activities. Best practices to mitigate fire risk include taking steps to maintain defensible space around buildings, using fire-resistant materials, and complying with vegetation management bylaws.

Individuals and businesses that engage in high-risk activities that may result in wildfires may be subject to considerable fines and/or administrative penalties.

What role do businesses and municipalities play?

Businesses operating in wildfire-prone areas should have emergency response plans, insurance coverage tailored to fire risks, and clear policies for employee and customer safety. Municipalities must ensure that land-use planning considers fire risk, maintain access routes for emergency responders, and enforce fire prevention bylaws. Cooperation between the public and private sectors is crucial for effective wildfire mitigation.

What legal considerations should property owners keep in mind when dealing with wildfire damage?

In the aftermath of a wildfire, insurance claims, disaster relief, and rebuilding efforts often come with legal complexities. Understanding insurance policies, navigating government assistance programs, and ensuring compliance with new building regulations can be challenging. Legal guidance can help homeowners and business owners navigate the claims process and avoid potential disputes.

When should property owners seek legal advice on wildfire preparedness?

It's always advisable to be proactive. Property owners and businesses should seek legal advice when purchasing property and operating in wildfire-prone areas, reviewing insurance policies, or planning construction or renovations. Legal counsel can also assist in understanding municipal and provincial regulations and ensuring compliance with fire safety requirements and legislation.

▶ For more information, contact Carolyn Paterson at cpaterson@fieldlaw.com or call 403-260-8506 or reach out to Austin Ward at award@fieldlaw.com or call 587-956-2754.

fieldlaw.com

"Field Law" is a trademark and trade name of Field LLP.

RULES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

Sanders strongly encouraged anyone in town with combustible materials on their roof, their building's sides or within 1.5 metres of the structure to replace them with noncombustible materials.

Jasper Fire Chief Mathew Conte described how cedar-shake roofs presented a significant challenge for fire crews the night of July 24 when the wildfire reached the townsite.

As embers rained down, multiple roof fires started up in town, quickly taxing crews as they tried to action one fire and move on to the next.

Conte also noted how wood decks, wood piles and debris in the yard were all catching points for embers, leading to multiple spot fires around town.

Conte was supportive of the new rules that follow FireSmart principles, ensuring noncombustible materials would be used for new buildings.

"Obviously, it's a little harder to implement on existing structures, so all we can really do is just continue with those home assessments on those structures and coach those residents on ways that they can help mitigate those hazards that could affect their home going forward," he said.

Mike Flannigan, a wildfire expert and British Columbia Innovation Research Chair at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, B.C., was also supportive of the new policies but advocated for making them mandatory for all structures, not just new ones, in high-risk locations. The insurance industry would help push this process along as wildfires cause more insured losses.

One of the biggest dangers is if embers cause a property to catch fire, this blaze could spread to other properties, even to those where the owner did their due diligence when it comes to FireSmart.

"You're only as strong as your weakest link, so that's why I say we have to move towards mandatory," Flannigan said. "I'll leave it to the decision-makers on how to get there. As I say, insurance is going to force some communities to get there a lot quicker than they would otherwise get there."

At-risk communities should also invest in a sprinkler system that can quickly be deployed to protect infrastructure from falling embers.

"It's not cheap, but losing a third of your town is even more expensive than the cost of having some structural protection sprinklers available at quick notice," Flannigan said.

Despite most of the surrounding forest around Jasper having burned down, Flannigan said fire could still come from the valley west of the townsite.

"To be honest, I'm more concerned about Banff than I am [Jasper] because two of the three valleys that lead to Jasper were recently burned, whereas Banff, that's not the case, and it's kind of overdue," he added. "I would expect a significant fire in the Bow Valley sometime in the next 10 years."

With climate change leading to more extreme weather and more human development on the landscape, Flannigan predicts Canada will continue to see disasters like the Jasper wildfire.

Even under extreme conditions, however, fires can be put out if there is an aggressive initial attack within 30 minutes.

"The boots on the ground put the fire out, but you got to get them there within that narrow window in extreme conditions," Flannigan said. "If it's not extreme, it's not a big deal. If it's extreme, 30 minutes, and if you miss that window, the horse has left the barn, and you're now out of luck."

Key changes and their reasoning:

Prohibiting wood siding and roofing:

To reduce the risk of fire spread, wood, except for heavy timber, is no longer permitted for exterior cladding or roofing.

Requiring a 1.5-meter non-combustible buffer:

This "immediate ignition zone" around buildings helps prevent embers from igniting flammable materials and potentially spreading fire to structures.

Incorporating FireSmart principles:

This includes changes to approved planting lists to ensure that vegetation around buildings is less flammable and less likely to contribute to fire spread.

Simplifying rebuilding processes:

The updated guidelines aim to make it easier for residents and businesses to rebuild after the fire while maintaining Jasper's unique character.

Supporting housing options:

Changes to land use policies also aim to increase housing options in Jasper, allowing for more units per lot and reducing parking requirements.



Protect Your Property with FireSmart Services from Alpine Precision Tree Services. Serving the Bow Valley's Wildfire Preparedness Needs Since 2008. At Alpine Precision Tree Services, we specialize in FireSmart solutions to help protect your home or business from the risk of wildfires. Our experienced, certified team works with property owners to reduce fire hazards and create defensible space around your property.

FireSmart Services We Offer:

- **FireSmart Fuel Reduction:** Minimize combustible vegetation around your property.
- **Hazardous Tree Removal:** Safely remove trees that pose a wildfire or wind hazard.
- **Pruning & Tree Health:** Ensure your trees are healthy and less likely to catch fire.
- **Wildlife Attractant Removal:** Reduce the risk of wildlife encounters that can add to fire risks.
- **FireSmart Consulting & Risk Assessments:** Expert advice on creating fire-resistant landscapes.

Why Choose Us?

- **Certified Arborists & Experienced Crew:** Our team includes ISA Certified Arborists, TRAQ & TPAQ certified experts.
- **Fully Insured & SECOR Certified:** We prioritize safety for your property, our crew, and the environment.
- **Local Experts:** Proudly serving Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, and beyond.

Don't Wait – Start FireSmart Preparation Today!

Ensure your property is ready for wildfire season.

Contact Alpine Precision Tree Services for a FireSmart consultation.

☎ 403-678-7312

✉ info@alpineprecision.ca

🌐 <http://www.alpineprecision.ca>



5 emergency preparedness steps from Banff's director of emergency management

BANFF - "I understand that people are concerned and, in some cases, afraid of wildfire season," said Katherine Severson, Banff's director of emergency management and protective services. "There is a lot of direction and resources available on our website (banff.ca) and ... effective things that people can do to be personally prepared. I don't want people to think there isn't action they can take."

- **Verify/validate insurance:** Homeowners should check which coverage they have for disasters such as fire, flooding, etc. that is deemed a risk to their property. Rental tenants should ensure content coverage for suite. Follow up with insurance companies once a year to make sure nothing has changed.

- **Register for alerts:** Alert systems such as the Banff Voyent Alert and Alberta Emergency Alert are great for updates if an emergency event is occurring, such as updates on if and where evacuation orders have been issued. Register using the links at banff.ca and ...

- **Have an evacuation plan:** Know how you would leave town, who to contact, where to go, and identify neighbours and/or family members who might need aid during an emergency situation.

- **Pre-identify, digitize important documents:** Have additional physical or digital copies of important documents such as a passport, health card, birth certificate, etc. and store them off-site. Using a smartphone, document all your possessions and crucial documents through video or photographs.

- **Be prepared to go or to stay:** A 72-hour kit for either an evacuation or staying at home should be ready to go, which would include enough food, water, medication, etc. for three days. Make sure any pets have similar items prepared, and in the event of an evacuation, take pets with you. For vehicle owners, keep your vehicle filled with as much fuel as can be afforded.

I don't have a personal vehicle, what should I do during an evacuation?

In the case of an evacuation, mass transportation, public and private buses will be used to evacuate those without access to a personal vehicle. It's important to register for systems like the Banff Voyent Alert, which can be found at banff.ca, that gives clear directions on where to access transportation, such as a Roam transit stop or another specific location deemed safe. Only bring 72-hour kits and have pets on a leash.

BANFF CENTRE MOUNTAIN FILM AND BOOK FESTIVAL



Join us November 1 – 9, 2025 to celebrate our 50th Anniversary! The 2025 Festival features films, speakers, adventurers, exhibitions, festival marketplace, and a special public symposium.

NOV 4 – 5

Fire and Ice Symposium

The Stories We Tell

This public symposium explores the role of storytelling to create positive impact and action, through the lens of changing ice and wildfire. Guest speakers include: Borge Ousland (NOR), Vincent Colliard (FR), James Balog (USA), and more.

\$190 | Symposium Pass

Includes: Keynote speakers, panel discussions, breakout sessions, closing reception

Festival Passes and Symposium Passes Now On Sale!

Full schedule announced and tickets on sale August 7.

Find out More
+ Get Passes



Jasper fire chief recounts wildfire, how his crew helped save most of the town

PETER SHOKEIR, JASPER FITZHUGH

JASPER – When Mathew Conte moved to Jasper to become its fire chief in 2021, he was well aware of the wildfire risk that the town faced.

That is a risk shared by every forested community in Canada.

“That risk and the hazard is always there,” Conte said. “It’s not really a matter of if it will happen but when it will happen because everybody that lives in the forest communities knows that there’s always going to be that potential that a fire will start and threaten the community.”

Jasper National Park already had its share of blazes, including the 2025 Excelsior wildfire and the 2022 Chetamon wildfire, before facing its worst one in a century last summer, which burned 32,722 hectares and destroyed 30 per cent of the townsite.

Conte, who also serves as director of emergency management for the Municipality of Jasper, noted that while any community within a coniferous forest was at risk, he acknowledged that trees killed by mountain pine beetle may have made Jasper more prone to wildfire.

“I’m by no means a forest management expert, but any time that you have dead trees over live trees, it’d definitely increase your risk,” he said.

In the weeks prior to the Jasper wildfire, the area was facing severe dry conditions with no precipitation. Local officials knew this would elevate the risk, and Parks Canada was already dealing with the Utopia fire in the Miette area along with a few other small blazes elsewhere.

On July 22, more fires broke out near the townsite and threatened to engulf the community. One was near the Jasper Transfer Station, which Conte and his department assisted Parks Canada with, followed by multiple fires south of town caused by lightning strikes.

After a helicopter reconned the south valley, the fire was projected to have grown about 100 hectares within the first hour. This drastic rate of growth played a decisive role in the decision to evacuate Jasper.



Chief Mathew Conte of the Jasper Fire Department.

PETER SHOKEIR | JASPER FITZHUGH

“We wanted to make sure we had enough time to get everybody out of the community safely and not have a situation where the fire was affecting their ability to evacuate,” Conte said. “It was an easy decision to make.”

More than 20,000 people evacuated from the Jasper townsite and the rest of the park, leaving firefighters to defend empty homes and businesses.

In the next two days, crews set up sprinklers to protect critical infrastructure from falling embers and worked to put a wet line and sprinkler protection around the townsite. More resources came to assist in preparing for the approaching fire, which arrived early in the evening on July 24.

Although Conte had helped tackle larger grassland fires in southern Alberta and the Kenow fire in Waterton, this was by far the most significant fire that he had ever faced.

Conte, who had been renting municipal housing, was among those who lost their home in the wildfire. Eight on-call casual firefighters also lost their homes, and four lost their regular jobs.

“To see in the destruction that was happening that night obviously took its toll on [community] members as well as the members of the fire department,” he said. “Every member in this department knows most people in this

town, so if they did not lose their homes, they knew people who did, whether it was friends, family, whoever. They were seeing some destruction that would affect their lives or their friends or family’s lives.”

Multiple roofs caught fire as the embers came down on the community, leading to multiple structures being set alight and quickly taxing crews as they worked to save as much of the town as possible.

Crews were relieved around 3 a.m. after working 18 hours straight. Conte himself stayed in town for another six hours. At that point, there was no threat from the ember shower, but the replacement crews were still actioning multiple structure fires and making sure they could not spread.

Ultimately, firefighters saved most of the town and all critical infrastructure. The one fatality was Alberta Wildfire member Morgan Kitchen.

For over three weeks, as crews worked to contain the fire, the Municipality of Jasper and many others worked to prepare the town for re-entry. Residents finally returned on Aug. 16 with members of the Jasper Volunteer Fire Brigade welcoming them at the town’s east entrance.

“It was definitely a good point to reach in the event, to know that a majority of the incident and that risk was mitigated, and we were at a point where we could start welcoming people back into the community,” Conte said.

Nine months later, the fire chief acknowledged how the devastating event continues to affect his department.

“We all have a job to do, and unfortunately, emergency services don’t stop working,” Conte said. “We have to, obviously, provide that coverage 24/7, which is why we hired [eight] new terms.”

Many members have taken time off for their mental health, and among other initiatives, the department is developing a mental health program that will require check-ins with a therapist after significant events.

“It’s going to be, unfortunately, an ongoing thing now for quite some time,” Conte said. “The impacts were pretty devastating to members of the departments as well as all community members.”

Know the risks in Banff. Be prepared.

Living in a mountain community means living with risks, such as wildfire, flooding, train derailment and severe weather.

The Town of Banff has invested considerable time and money in mitigating our primary risk: wildfire. So far this spring, we’ve removed 230 coniferous trees from around municipal buildings and infrastructure, and removed hundreds more trees on the edge of town – equivalent to an area of 21 football fields. We’ve invested more in structure protection equipment and training to combat encroaching wildfire.

Because wildfire knows no boundaries, we’re collaborating with Parks Canada, Canmore, Lake Louise and Alberta Parks to create fireguards and forest thinning around our communities, to slow down fires to give our firefighters time to respond. We’re doing our part, and we need residents to do their part.

We can’t eliminate the risk of wildfire, but together we can make our streets more resilient. Homeowners are urged to book a free FireSmart home assessment on ways to make your property safer.

Everyone needs to be ready for evacuation, and that starts with signing up for emergency alerts and preparing a “go bag” emergency kit for your home and vehicle.

Learn more about events, activities and opportunities to be prepared at banff.ca/Emergency





Recent events combined with continued dry conditions across the Mountain Parks areas has highlighted the need for wildfire prevention, preparedness, and community resilience in the face of a changing climate.

Jasper woman recalls preparing to go into labour when wildfire struck



Meg Markulin and Terry Chauncey welcomed Atticus Wren Chauncey into the world in Kelowna after the Jasper wildfire forced them to flee the town.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

PETER SHOKEIR, JASPER FITZHUGH

JASPER – Meg Markulin was 38 weeks pregnant and expecting to give birth any day when the wildfires began burning through Jasper National Park last summer.

Because she had a two-strand umbilical cord rather than the usual three blood vessels, there were concerns about her going into labour.

"They had monitoring here at the hospital, and during one of the sessions I was doing, which was the Thursday before we got evacuated, I was having contractions, and his heart rate had dropped," Markulin said. "They were a bit concerned, so they told me just to take it easy and to stay cold."

Markulin was told to return to the hospital if she experienced contractions again. She originally intended to give birth in Hinton with its larger health-care centre, but fate had different plans.

On July 22, Markulin was in her home's basement and keeping the windows open to beat the heat. She spent the day napping and reading and had a friend over for coffee before her partner Terry Chauncey, who is the head chef at Terra, came home and cooked burgers for dinner.

Markulin remembered a powerful gust of wind that knocked over items and forced them to close all the windows. As she prepared to get ready for bed, she saw how stormy it was outside.

It wasn't until her sister called that she realized something was wrong.

"I just remember talking to her, I was just like,

'OK, we'll get everything ready just in case. I'm sure it'll be fine, though,' and then I looked outside, and I was like, 'Oh, never mind. There's ash falling,'" she said.

The couple soon learned about the two fires that had started near town, and not taking any chances, they decided to leave even before the evacuation order. Chauncey went to fuel up their vehicle at the busy station, while Markulin began packing.

"I just remember running around the house," she said. "We have cat, so I was getting her litter box and her food, but all the windows were shut, so I was just overheating, and there was a point where I grabbed canned tuna, ramen and a steak knife and a can opener, and then after that I was just like, 'I can't do anymore.'"

With to-go bags with clothes already in the car, the couple set out to stay with Markulin's sister in Kelowna, B.C. As they left, Markulin kept telling herself they would only be gone for the weekend.

"I was panicking a bit, so I was just trying to stay positive," she said. "There was a point during the summer before this happened, I made a joke. It was, 'I'm going to end up giving birth on the side of the highway because there's going to be a fire.' And then I was just like, 'Oh, I should have bit my tongue.'"

On the drive, the couple were joking to ease the tension, and Markulin checked in on her friends to make sure everyone was safe, learning how lucky they were to have left early and avoided traffic. They also had to deal with their stressed-out cat, which doesn't travel well.

WOMAN RECALLS

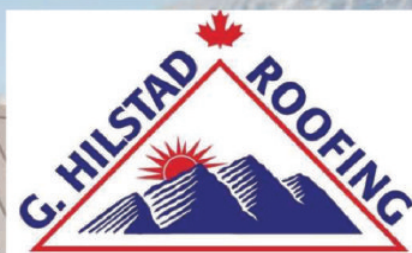
CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

Class A Fire Rated and Non-Combustible Roofing Materials

Hilstad Roofing is a locally owned and operated family business serving the Bow Valley since 1986. Let us help you upgrade your roof with Fire Smart Products. With over 75 years of combined Sloped Roofing Experience, Hilstad Roofing can help you tackle your roofing projects, from Residential Homes to Alpine Huts we have you **Covered**. Give us a call today 403-678-4687

Info@hilstadroofing.com

<https://hilstadroofing.com>



Metal Standing Seam Roof Panels

- Non-Combustible
- 40 Year Paint Warranty
- Available in 26ga and 24ga
- Available in SMP, Kynar and Printech Paint Finishes
- High Temperature Rated Ice and Water Shields and Synthetic Underlays Rated for Use Under Metal

Malarkey Roofing Shingles, Vista® AR (algae-resistant), Legacy® Scotchgard™, Windsor® Scotchgard™

- Class A Fire Rated
- Class 4 Impact Rated
- Smog-Reducing Granules
- Upeycled Rubber, Upeycled Plastic

Class A Fire Rating is the highest rating achievable for building materials



All Roofing Products listed can be found at Beacon Building Products.
2750 Centre Ave, Calgary AB, T2A 2L3

WOMAN RECALLS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

Markulin and Chauncey arrived in Kelowna the next morning and spent the next day relaxing. On July 24, they started receiving news about buildings on fire in Jasper. With the very real possibility that the entire town would soon be destroyed, they discussed starting over in Kelowna.

On July 25, they went to the hospital in the morning because Markulin was feeling crampy and was worried about the umbilical cord. They briefly left but soon had to return when her contractions began.

Despite worries about how the umbilical cord would handle contractions, Markulin was safely able to give birth to Atticus Wren Chauncey, who weighed six pounds, two ounces.

While fire destroyed nearly a third of the town, Markulin's home was among those that were spared. She attributed this to the massive sprinkler system on a neighbour's house that may have saved the block.

Once the town reopened in mid-August, Chauncey went ahead to check on the house. The young family was soon all in Jasper but had to bounce around for a while until their place was cleaned, and because the bathroom window had been left open, their nursery needed to be replaced.

Markulin was saddened that many of her friends had lost their homes and would likely never be able to return to Jasper.

"It was just a bit heartbreaking there, and I was all excited to walk around town and show off the baby, and just not being able to do some of that or see neighbours ... it was a bit sad," she said.

Markulin is hoping to return to work at Jasper Law once daycare opens in August. She described the last nine months since the wildfire as "weird," noting that there was still a cloud over Jasper, and when going on walks with her friend, she always makes sure to avoid the burnt areas.

Nonetheless, she was grateful to firefighters for saving 70 per cent of the townsite and was optimistic about the community's ability to recover.

"Jasper is Jasper," she said. "I find everybody's rather resilient. We're a pretty strong community, so I'm hoping that once all this settles, we can start getting back into the groove and maybe grow a little as a community because we've learned so much just from this evacuation."

Meg Markulin and Atticus Wren Chauncey.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



MITIGATE YOUR WILDFIRE RISK WITH TAILORED TREE SOLUTIONS.

With Joeys background in wildfire fighting and years of experience pruning and removing trees we can help you design and implement a plan to protect your property from wildfires. We can help create a plan for your unique situation, accounting for slopes, water features, etc., and possibly including additional measures such as creating fire breaks on larger properties. Now is the best time for wildfire defence strategies. Give us a call today to see how we can help.

403-450-3456 | www.cowboytrailtree.ca

LARGE AREA WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION FOR THE BOW VALLEY

RainStream™ mobile towers quickly deploy to water mist up to 10 football fields in area at 4,000 litres / minute

Thank you Canmore Golf & Curling Club, Bow Valley fire departments and residents for making the RainStream™ wildfire suppression system demonstration a huge success!

www.wildfireinov.com



Hey, Bow Valley: We're Prepared, Are You?

Emergency Preparedness Day is made possible in part thanks to the members of the Bow Valley Interagency Wildfire Committee

Wildfire and Emergency Preparedness Day

**Saturday, May 10
from 1 – 4 p.m.**

Canmore Fire Station,
1200 Steward Road



Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility. Join the Town of Canmore, Town of Banff, MD of Bighorn, Parks Canada, Alberta Wildfire, Alberta Parks, and the RCMP to learn about what we have done to prepare for emergencies in the Bow Valley, and to find out about what you can do to protect yourself, your family, and your community this hazard season.

- Demonstrations of the equipment used in structure protection and wildland firefighting
- Find out about current wildfire mitigation projects
- Learn about community preparedness and evacuations
- Register for emergency alerts and notifications
- Sign up in person at the Fire Station to get an exclusive tour of the Debris Flood Retention Structure at Cougar Creek (limited spaces available; tours are scheduled for 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.)

Walk, bike, or Roam to this event! Parking is limited.

canmore.ca/emergencypreparedness