



May 5, 2010
For immediate release

**Tour a wildfire resilient home: Canada's insurers
contribute to Emergency Preparedness Week**

The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR) invites members of the media to tour a wildfire resilient home. As part of the insurance industry's ongoing commitment to educate Canadian homeowners about disaster safety, ICLR has once again chosen Emergency Preparedness Week (May 2-8) to unveil its latest home retrofit project, this time in Jasper, Alberta.

Where: 1 Brewster Crescent, Jasper, Alberta
When: Wednesday, May 5 at 10 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Paul Kovacs, Executive Director of ICLR, will conduct a media tour of the home. Says Kovacs: "With more people choosing to live in the wildland/urban interface, more residential properties are exposed to the threat of wildfires. Homeowners living in such interface areas, indeed families across Canada that are vulnerable to natural hazards, can prepare now for perils that will inevitably strike in the future."

The Jasper home retrofit includes:

- Cedar roof shingles replaced with asphalt shingles
- Cedar siding replaced by stucco
- Coniferous bushes replaced with deciduous plants
- Reduction of surrounding ladder and forest litter/fuels
- Reduction of forest litter/fuels behind property
- Wood pile moved away from the home
- Providing a disaster preparedness kit.

The retrofit is based on the FireSmart program. FireSmart was developed by Partners in Protection, and is endorsed by governments across Canada, the insurance industry, and many other stakeholders as Canada's national program for promoting wildfire safety.

"We commend and encourage programs like FireSmart because we believe it's a step in the right direction to help communities adapt to climate change," said Don Forgeron, President and CEO, Insurance Bureau of Canada. "We have had a very mild and dry winter and predictions are for a dry summer which means an increased risk of wildfire," he added. "Additionally, we are pleased to support ICLR's work to raise awareness about these very simple steps that homeowners can take to protect properties everywhere."

IBC produced a Video News Release and informational video to help bring the story to life. (Details follow).

This year, many communities across Canada are vulnerable to an elevated risk of wildfire due to the mild and dry winter. Actions to protect your home and property should be taken early, and follow a comprehensive strategy like that set out in the FireSmart program.

In 2003, Canada's most expensive wildfires struck British Columbia. Over 2,500 blazes swept more than 260,000 hectares of wildlands in the province that year, aided largely by very dry conditions and ignited by human as well as natural sources. Three people were killed, more than 45,000 were evacuated, and fire destroyed a total of 334 homes and many businesses. All told, there was more than \$200 million in insured damage.

According to Kovacs: "Many of the steps homeowners can take to protect their homes from wildfire require nothing more than the right information and a little bit of elbow grease. Moving woodpiles away from the home, cutting back or removing trees, and cleaning the property of dry leaves and branches are just a few examples. These actions and others will be showcased at this event."

This is the eighth year that Canada's insurers, through ICLR, have showcased a retrofitted home as part of Emergency Preparedness Week. In 2009 a home in Toronto was retrofitted to protect against wind, winterstorm and blackout and in 2008 a home in Montreal was retrofitted to protect against winter storm and earthquake. In 2007 a home in Edmonton was retrofitted to protect against tornado and winter storms and in 2006, a home in Ottawa was made more resilient to earthquakes and winter storms. In 2005, a home in Vancouver was made more resilient to earthquakes, and in 2004, a Halifax home was protected against hurricanes. In 2003, a home in London was made more resilient to tornadoes. The Institute has also retrofitted a community health centre, and has retrofitted child care centres across Canada as part of its "Protecting our Kids from Disasters" program.

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Established in 1998 by Canada's property and casualty insurers, ICLR is an independent, not-for-profit research institute based in Toronto and at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. ICLR is a centre of excellence for disaster loss prevention research and education. ICLR's research staff is internationally recognized for pioneering work in a number of fields including wind and seismic engineering, atmospheric sciences, water resources engineering and economics. Multi-disciplined research is a foundation for ICLR's work to build communities more resilient to disasters.

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Attention Editors: See below for access to an IBC-produced Video News Release on this story that will be available via satellite on **Wednesday, May 5th from 14:00 – 14:30**

plus an instructional video entitled "***How to FireSmart Your Home***" that can be downloaded and embedded on your website.

Video News Release:

A video news release on this story will be available via satellite on **Wednesday, May 5th from 14:00 – 14:30 Firm. The satellite coordinates are below.**

Dome Tx1 - down SAT 5 to Toronto Teleport - and uplink to:
Anik F2C 3B - Analog
u/l: 6045 H
d/l: 3820 V
SpaceConnection: 3-15032
Telesat: 218524

Pgad has been left for local broadcasters as requested.

Instructional video for downloading:

To view the "***How To FireSmart Your Home***" video, click on the link below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VZWwC0PhUk>

You are also welcome to embed this video on your web site. (Embed code available below video.)

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