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FireSmart and WaterWise go hand-in-hand in the Okanagan

The Okanagan Basin Water Board launched their annual Make Water Work campaign on May 30

[Brittany Webster](#)

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board has launched its Make Water Work campaign and is encouraging communities to step up their game on water conservation.

The annual campaign was launched at Lake Country's Lakestone Villas on Tyndall Road, a townhouse complex that proved being fire-smart and water-wise makes all the difference when it comes to battling wildfires.

Lake Country Fire Chief Darren Lee explained how the houses were built with concrete siding and fire-resistant materials, fire-smart plants were selected for the landscape and nothing was planted too close to the homes. The Grouse Complex wildfires in the summer of 2023 wrapped around Lakestone Villas, but no structures were lost due to the efforts of firefighters and the preventative measures taken when building the townhomes.

Lake Country Mayor Blair Ireland noted that upgrades to water mains just weeks before the fires ignited also played a significant factor, allowing for the use of multiple fire hydrants without sacrificing pressure or supply elsewhere.

OBWB Communications Director Corrine Jackson said the Make Water Work campaign launched in 2011.

"Not only do we have less water per person than anywhere in Canada, the Okanagan also has one of the highest rates of water use in Canada. The second largest use of water in the Okanagan is used on our household lawns and gardens."

Jackson added that the strain on water usage is growing.

While Lee explained that what might seem to be a good idea during an emergency isn't always, explaining why leaving your sprinkler running when you evacuate your home is a bad idea.

"In a municipal water system there's a reserve built into it," Lee said. "Even if you think of somebody on a rural property who has a well, it's really the same problem. There's only so much volume available... it's not a limitless supply of water."

Jackson also mentioned that your insurance isn't likely to cover water damage to your home if you leave the sprinkler running, but it would be covered if it's something the fire department turns on. The suggestion was made to leave things like sprinklers ready to go for firefighters if you have time before evacuating.

OBWB is encouraging all residents to take the Make Water Work pledge ahead of wildfire season. The campaign includes six pledges for homeowners to conserve water on their property.

Acting Mayor of Armstrong Neil Todd joined the event to boast that Armstrong has won the campaign's Community Champion award six of the last 13 years for having the most pledges per capita. Todd said he and his wife have taken the pledge.

Learn more about water conservation and the Make Water Work campaign by visiting makewaterwork.ca