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Kelowna

SAVE WATER, PREVENT FIRES

# Okanagan residents urged to get WaterWise and FireSmart

Cindy White - May 30, 2024 / 4:32 pm



Cindy White **WATCH HERE:** <https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/490052/Okanagan-residents-urged-to-get-WaterWise-and-FireSmart>

The province has pushed the Okanagan down to [drought level one](#) due to recent rain and cooler temperatures, but don't expect water restrictions to ease.

In fact, the Okanagan Basin Water Board is asking people in the valley to use less and take the [Make Water Work](#) pledge.

It launched this year's campaign in the Okanagan Centre community of Lakestone, which didn't lose a single home despite fire burning all around it last summer. The design of the newer neighbourhood helped crews battle the blaze.

"We ended up hooking up to the one hydrant and just went back and forth with the truck. And we had land lines going in between houses. We were running back and forth because it was coming up on the other side of the road too," said Dan Currie with Ellison Fire Department Station 61, who was greeted with cheers and applause from residents when he introduced himself at Thursday's news conference.

Lake Country fire chief Darren Lee pointed out some of the FireSmart features that make Lakestone a model community. They include plantings that are 1.5-2 metres from the home, concrete siding and a fire resistant roof.

Sarah at Kel Lake Garden Centre says people who want to make their yards FireSmart and WaterWise fear they will have a very limited selection of plant materials, but that's simply not the case.

"We are getting in plant material on a regular basis. We are cutting out the things like cedars. We don't want people to come in and be tempted to get those sorts of things when we have so many different alternatives," she said.

Some communities, including Peachland and Lake Country, are getting tough on vegetation that is a known fire hazard. Peachland has banned the sale of conifers within the district, while Lake Country is looking at restricting future use of some plant matter. It's also starting water restrictions early this year.

"It's not something we normally do right away but we're doing this out of prudence," said mayor Blair Ireland. "We don't know how the weather is going to line up this summer. Hopefully it keeps raining."

By taking the Make Water Work pledge you could be eligible for prizes for committing to measures like only watering your lawn between dusk and dawn and choose plants suitable for our dry climate. The community with the most pledges will be named the Make Water Work champion.

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