

LECTURE KIT — MODULE 02

The Nine BlindSpots

What Communities Can't See — Until It's Too Late

Professional Development Lecture Kit

1 — Module Summary

Most wildfire disasters don't begin at ignition. They begin in conditions that were already present in the landscape, the infrastructure, and the social fabric of a community — long before the fire arrived. This module introduces the Nine BlindSpots framework: nine location-specific risk conditions that standard planning tools consistently fail to reveal at the local scale.

THREE LAYERS OF VULNERABILITY

LAYER	FOCUS	BLINDSPOTS
Layer 1	Fire Drivers	1. Ignition-Prone Areas 2. High-Risk Fuel & Behaviour Zones 3. Ember Exposure Sectors
Layer 2	Operational Constraints	4. Response-Delay Terrain 5. Evacuation Route Reliability 6. Critical Infrastructure Exposure
Layer 3	Systemic Stressors	7. Economic & Insurance Exposure 8. Population Vulnerability 9. Situational Awareness & Information Continuity

CORE CONCEPT: COMPOUND RISK

Disasters rarely result from a single unresolved BlindSpot. They happen when two or more conditions overlap at the same place at the same time. Each condition in isolation is manageable. Combined, they produce a rapid breach with limited options. The module closes with a diagnostic principle: communities don't fail because they ignore wildfire risk — they fail because breach conditions emerge outside their field of view, where responsibility is diffuse and decisions are delayed until options collapse.

KEY PRINCIPLE

The purpose of the Nine BlindSpots framework is not prediction. It is prevention. Named. Located. Decision-ready.

2 — Key Terms

TERM	DEFINITION
BlindSpot	A location-specific condition that can turn a wildfire from a manageable event into a disaster, and that is not clearly visible using the planning tools most communities currently have.
Layer 1 — Fire Drivers	The physical conditions shaping where fire is most likely to start and how it will move: ignition sources, fuel behaviour, and ember transport.
Layer 2 — Operational Constraints	Contextual factors — terrain, infrastructure, access, time — that limit effective response even when a community is well-prepared.
Layer 3 — Systemic Stressors	Social, economic, and governance conditions that determine whether a community can act on what it knows before options collapse.
Ignition-Prone Areas	Locations with elevated probability of fire start due to rail corridors, transmission lines, recreation pressure, or geological factors such as Shield edge terrain.
Ember Exposure Sector	A directional zone around a community where prevailing wind conditions make ember transport most likely — embers can travel 2–3 km ahead of the fire front.
Compound Risk	The condition produced when two or more BlindSpots overlap at the same location at the same time, creating a rapid breach scenario with limited response options.
Initial Attack Window	The narrow period after ignition during which suppression resources can succeed. Response-Delay Terrain (BlindSpot 4) can close this window before resources arrive.
Situational Awareness & Information Continuity	BlindSpot 9 — the condition in which decision-makers during a wildfire event are working from different information, causing coordination breakdown. Described as the BlindSpot that amplifies all others.
Field of View	The domain of risk that is actively monitored or understood by a given agency or jurisdiction. BlindSpots by definition exist outside the field of view of existing planning tools.

3 — Discussion Questions

Questions progress from comprehension through application to systemic challenge. Use them individually for reflection or in group settings for structured discussion.

UNDERSTAND — CONFIRM THE CONCEPTS

- 1 The module defines a BlindSpot not as a failure but as a gap. What is the distinction being made — and why does that distinction matter for how communities should respond to this framework?
- 2 The three layers of BlindSpots move from physical fire drivers to operational constraints to systemic stressors. Why does the framework move in that direction — from fire physics to human systems — rather than the reverse?
- 3 BlindSpot 9 — Situational Awareness and Information Continuity — is described as the one that amplifies all the others. What does that mean, and can you give an example of how fragmented information would make another BlindSpot harder to manage?

APPLY — CONNECT TO YOUR COMMUNITY

- 4 Of the nine BlindSpots, which one is your community most likely to have mapped with genuine local precision — and which one are you least confident about? What does that gap tell you about where your planning attention should go next?
- 5 The module describes compound risk as the actual mechanism of disaster — two or more BlindSpots overlapping at the same place and time. Can you construct a realistic compound risk scenario using your community's specific geography?
- 6 BlindSpot 8 asks who cannot simply leave during an evacuation order. Who are those people in your community? Where do they live? And is that information currently integrated into your evacuation planning in a practical, located way?

CHALLENGE — PUSH INTO SYSTEMIC THINKING

- 7 The module argues that BlindSpots persist not because communities are negligent, but because no planning tool was designed to reveal them at local precision. If that's true, what does it say about the adequacy of current provincial and national wildfire planning frameworks — and who is responsible for closing that gap?
- 8 Several of the nine BlindSpots fall between jurisdictions — the forest outside your boundary, the highway through crown land, the transmission corridor crossing three authorities. What governance mechanisms, if any, currently exist to manage risk that lives between jurisdictions? What would it take to create them where they don't exist?

9 The module closes with: 'The purpose is not prediction. It is prevention.' What does a community that has genuinely operationalized that principle look like — in terms of how it meets, how it budgets, how it communicates risk publicly? What would need to change in your community to move in that direction?

4 — Community Self-Assessment

This diagnostic is not an evaluation — there are no wrong answers, only honest ones. Use it individually before a team conversation, or complete it together as a group to surface differences in perception.

	YES	PARTIAL	NO	DON'T KNOW
We have mapped the specific ignition-prone locations (rail, power lines, recreation areas) within 10 km of our community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We understand which areas of surrounding forest would exhibit extreme fire behaviour under prevailing wind conditions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have assessed which sectors of our community are most likely to receive ember transport from the dominant fire approach directions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We know which parts of our threat perimeter would be effectively beyond the initial attack window given current access and resource constraints.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our evacuation routes have been assessed for reliability under actual fire conditions — smoke, road crossing risk, traffic capacity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The location and evacuation-specific needs of our most vulnerable populations are documented and integrated into current plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our fire services, emergency management, planning, infrastructure, and council teams share a common spatial picture of wildfire risk — the same map, the same language, the same priorities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflection: Based on your responses above, which single BlindSpot — if resolved — would have the greatest positive impact on your community's wildfire resilience? What would it take to begin resolving it within the next 12 months?

5 — One Thing To Do This Week

Three actions requiring no budget, no approval, and no technical expertise — just intention and attention.

<p>Action 1</p>	<p>Pull out your community's most current wildfire risk map and identify which of the nine BlindSpot categories it directly addresses — and which ones are absent. Write down the gaps. That list is your starting point.</p>
<p>Action 2</p>	<p>Have a ten-minute conversation with one colleague from a different department — planning, infrastructure, emergency management, or council — and ask them: 'Which direction do you think wildfire is most likely to approach us from?' Compare your answers. The differences in those answers are a live demonstration of BlindSpot 9.</p>
<p>Action 3</p>	<p>Identify one specific location in or around your community that you've always had a vague concern about from a wildfire perspective but have never formally assessed. Name it. That act of naming is the first step toward making it visible, located, and decision-ready.</p>

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