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Fire destroys Canberra homes. 29/12/2005. ABC News Online

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Fire destroys Canberra homes

A fire in Canberra this afternoon has destroyed two townhouses and severely damaged two others.

The fire brigade says a grass fire fuelled by strong winds began near the former brickworks in the inner suburb of Yarralumla.

Two homes were destroyed in the Canberra blaze. (ABC)

The situation is now under control, with fire crews in the process of cleaning up.

An all out assault from ground crews and from the air had the fire contained within about an hour and saved at least another two homes.

Flying embers caused spot fires in gardens around the area.

Many residents were forced to use water to put them out.

"The smoke was billowing over, and it had obviously taken, and the next minute I just laid some mulch on my front garden this morning, and my little daughter yelled 'it's on fire', and she was jumping up and down on this little patch of mulch, so you can imagine what it was like over there," one resident said.

Police have declared the area surrounding the Yarralumla brickworks a crime scene.

Resident Greg Cornwell, whose townhouse backs onto the brickworks reserve, suspects the fire could have been started by a cigarette.

"One can speculate, but the alarm goes off down there a great deal," he said.

"We know there are young children getting in ... what they do I hate to speculate but I think we'd be a bit naive if we didn't think a few of them smoked."

Fire chief Chris Macguire says it serves as a timely reminder of the need for residents to be prepared.

"One of the things that we will be focusing very early next week is to basically get out into the community here, distribute some of the information that they should have already have we would hope on bushfires in the bush capital," he said.

"And just working with them and show them the right way to prepare their properties.

"It's going to be a long hot dry summer."