

Wildfires often start unnoticed and can quickly rage out of control. Do your part to protect your property and the lives of loved ones... be prepared for wildfire.

UNDERSTANDING THE DANGER

Wildfires are a natural part of life. Almost every day, there is a wildfire burning somewhere in the United States. More and more, homes are being built near forests or rural areas where wildfires are a reality. In the recent past, wildfires have burned an average of over 8,000,000 acres in this country each year, destroying hundreds of homes.

There are ways to protect your property and loved ones from the dangers of wildfire. Although the when and where of wildfire may not be predictable, the way wildfires burn is predictable. If it's predictable— it's preventable.

BUILD AND LANDSCAPE WITH WILDFIRE IN MIND

If you're lucky enough to be building or remodeling a home, choose materials with wildfire safety in mind. Use fire-resistant, non-combustible materials wherever you can, but especially on roofs, siding, and decking. Plant trees and shrubs that are fire-resistant, like hardwoods instead of pines.



IT'S UP TO EVERYONE TO PREVENT WILDFIRE

Most wildfires are started by people. Do your part to prevent wildfire with these tips:

Be up-to-date on local laws and fire safety information. Contact your local fire department, forestry service or department of health for more information.

If the fire department can't get to your home, they can't protect it. Make sure the entrance to your home is clearly identified and marked with your name and address.

If you see a potentially hazardous condition that could lead to a wildfire, report it to the proper authorities.

Teach children that matches and lighters are tools, not toys, and report every instance of juvenile fire setting to your local fire department.

Keep fire emergency numbers posted in a place where they are easily seen.

Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety and have a plan in place to react quickly if disaster strikes.

BE PREPARED FOR WILDFIRES:

Wildfires are a fact of life. Preparation, planning and quick action in the event of a wildfire may save your home, your possessions, and your life.

For more information, visit the following:

- www.firewise.org
- www.smokeybear.com
- ww.fs.fed.us

PLANNING
AHEAD

WILDFIRES



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BEFORE THE WILDFIRE

Each year many homes are lost to wildfire, but some homes survive. The difference is **preparation**. Use the following guidelines to minimize the risk of losing your home to wildfire.

Keep your roof and all gutters clean and free of debris.

Clean chimneys once a year and inspect them at least twice a year. Install approved stovepipes with a spark arrester.

Instruct each member of your family on how to properly use a fire extinguisher.

Have fire-fighting tools such as rakes, axes, buckets, chain saws and shovels on hand.

Have ready access to a ladder that can reach your roof.

Consider the installation of protective shutters or fire-resistant drapes for windows.

THE BEST DEFENSE: CREATE A FIRE SAFE ZONE AROUND YOUR HOME

Create a **Fire Safe Zone** 30 to 100 feet around the perimeter of your home in order to reduce the fuel that wildfires require, thereby reducing the chance of disaster. The size of the Fire Safe Zone depends on the area surrounding your home. With open land or hardwood forest, 30 feet may be sufficient. If a pine forest surrounds your home, 100 feet would be the minimum safety zone. Sloped home sites present additional challenges. Contact your local fire department or forestry service for additional advice.

Within the Fire Safe Zone around your home, follow these prevention tips:

- Remove all debris, including dead leaves, branches and flammable vegetation.
- Have a minimum of 15 feet between the crowns of trees and ensure that there are no branches within 15 feet of the ground.
- Dead branches that extend over the roof of your home are a fire hazard. Remove them.
- Keep trees and vegetation 15 feet away from stovepipes and chimneys.
- Clear all vines and other vegetation from the sides of your home or other structures.
- Keep grass closely mowed.
- Create a 10-foot clear space around propane tanks and barbeque grills.
- Dispose of trash in approved receptacles. If you burn trash and debris, make sure you follow local laws and guidelines.
- Dispose of fireplace and barbeque ashes in metal containers and soak the ashes for at least two days before burying them.
- Flammable liquids and materials such as gasoline and oily rags should be stored in approved safety cans, and placed a safe distance from the base of structures.
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away from your home, up slope if possible. Keep a 20-foot area surrounding the firewood clear of debris and flammable vegetation.

PREPARE FOR AN EVACUATION

When a wildfire is approaching, you won't have time to search for supplies. It's essential to prepare an **Emergency Evacuation Kit** with items you'll need if required to leave in a hurry. Keep the kit handy at all times. Here are some suggested items to include:

Pack drinking water for each family member for three days (one gallon of water per person, per day). Have enough food to last three days. Choose foods that won't spoil, such as dried foods and canned goods. Be sure to pack a can opener.

Pack a change of clothing and an extra pair of shoes for each person.

Bring along blankets and sleeping bags in case you have to stay at a shelter or friend's home.

Pack a first aid kit and gather important prescription medications. Sanitation supplies should also be included.

Include a battery powered flashlight and radio along with extra batteries.

Include an extra set of car keys, extra cash, credit cards and traveler's checks.

Pack any special items that infants or elderly members of your family may require.

Include important information, such as phone numbers, your insurance policy, a list of your home's contents and irreplaceable family treasures, such as photo albums.

EXTRA PRECAUTIONS TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

Close all windows, doors, and vents. If you have shutters, blinds or heavy curtains, shut them. Remove lightweight curtains from windows.

Turn off gas utilities and disconnect propane tanks, if possible.

Open the fireplace damper and close the screen.

Place flammable indoor and outdoor furniture in the center of rooms, away from windows and doors.

WHEN A WILDFIRE APPROACHES

If a wildfire is threatening your area, stay informed. Monitor radio and television for updates. Always follow the instructions of local authorities.

Be ready for a quick escape. Have your vehicle parked, outside of a garage, facing the direction of escape, packed, keys in the ignition, with the doors and windows shut. Close the garage doors and windows and disconnect any electric door openers.

Confine all of your pets to one room. Have a plan to care for your pets if you must evacuate.

If the authorities suggest an evacuation, do so at once.

Wear protective clothing. Choose cotton or wool clothing, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, protective shoes, gloves and a handkerchief or scarf to protect your face.

When leaving your home, lock all doors and windows.

Inform someone when you leave and where you're going.

Choose an evacuation route that takes you away from the wildfire area.

Keep at least one light on in each room to assist fire fighters in seeing your home through heavy smoke.

Make sure garden hoses are connected to outside faucets.

If you have a well and pump, set up a portable generator to keep the water flowing.

To further protect your home, place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near fuel tanks.

Wet any vegetation within 15 feet of your home.

