

LIVING WITH FIRE

US Fish and Wildlife Service • Bureau of Land Management • National Park Service • Bureau of Indian Affairs • USDA Forest Service

LIVING IN A NATURAL FIRE ENVIRONMENT

The Prairie Grassland Region is an area where fire has always played a prominent role in the natural environment. Long before towns and subdivisions were established across the Great Plains, fires were a natural result of the frequent summer thunderstorms that traveled across the mountains and plains. However, decades of fire suppression have resulted in a large accumulation of fuels that have the potential to create intense wildfires.

Within this natural fire environment, there are individual houses, subdivisions and entire communities. Many homes, however, would be unable to survive an intense wildfire. Since it is not a question of "if" wildfires will occur but "when" they will occur, the likelihood of human life and property loss is great and growing.

Our ability to live more safely in this fire environment greatly depends upon our use of "pre-fire activities." Pre-fire activities are actions taken before a wildfire

occurs which improve the survivability of people and homes. They include proper vegetation management around the home or farm (known as survivable space), use of fire resistant building materials, appropriate subdivision design, and other measures. Research clearly demonstrates that pre-fire activities save lives and property.

The Great Plains fire prevention cooperators, which includes many federal, state and local fire management agencies, are using a program called "FIREWISE". FIREWISE was created to encourage the widespread use of pre-fire activities such as those listed in this and many other publications available to you.

For more information concerning the "FIREWISE" program or wildland fire safety information, contact local land management agencies, local fire departments or visit the websites listed on the back page of this publication.

"LIVING WITH FIRE" PRE-FIRE ACTIVITIES



The pre-fire activities implemented by this homeowner included a green and well maintained landscape, reduction of wildland vegetation around the perimeter of the property, a fire resistant roof, and a good access road with a turnaround area. The charred surroundings of the home show that these pre-fire activities effectively protected it when wildfire hit.

THE "WHY WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT WILDFIRE" EQUATION

Fire is a natural part of our environment. Our Great Plains were burning long before there was a Bismarck, Great Bend, Scottsbluff, Aberdeen or Billings.

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Many homes are built and maintained in this fire environment without regard to wildfire.

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With more people using our wildlands, there is a greater chance of fire starts.

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Today's wildfires can burn intensely and be difficult to control.

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All this adds up to potential for:

- Greater loss of life
- Increased property losses
- More damage to natural resources
- More money spent on firefighting