

Tips to Protect Your Home From Wildland Fires

United States Forest Service research has found that the best method to protect a house from a forest fire is by creating a defensible space 100 feet around the home. The same research also concluded that by treating a space 500 meters around communities, an area known as the Community

Protection Zone, residences and businesses would have a greater chance of surviving a wildfire. This tip sheet can help educate landowners and communities about steps they can take to greatly reduce the risk of damage to their property from inevitable wildfires.

CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION GUIDE

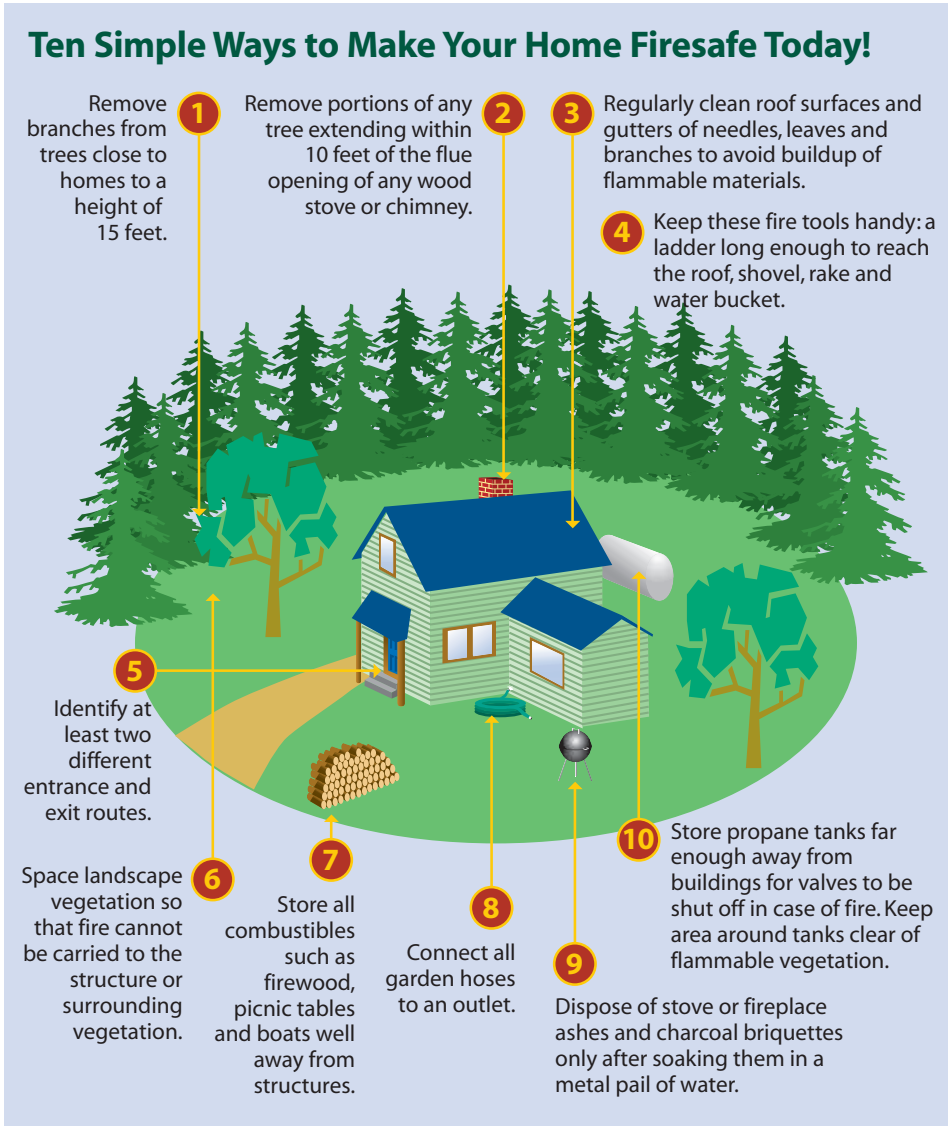
Now that warmer weather has arrived, many families use this time as opportunity to make repairs or renovations to their homes. A home's chances of surviving a wildfire can be greatly improved through careful planning, design, and landscaping. Simple, cost effective and attractive firewise alternatives should be considered as you build or retrofit a home. Whether you're building a new home or making repairs to an existing one, you can work with building contractors, your architect, local home improvement stores, and fire protection agencies to create a design that is both aesthetically pleasing and firewise.

Roofing Materials

One of the main causes of fire damage to homes in the community protection zone is the flammability of roofing materials. Roofs easily catch fire when wind-blown sparks land on them or from direct contact with flames from nearby trees or neighboring structures. Once a roof ignites, fire can move quickly to the rest of your home.

When installing a new roof on your home, try to strike the right balance of cost, aesthetics and fire protection. Ask

Ten Simple Ways to Make Your Home Firesafe Today!



- Remove branches from trees close to homes to a height of 15 feet.
- Remove portions of any tree extending within 10 feet of the flue opening of any wood stove or chimney.
- Regularly clean roof surfaces and gutters of needles, leaves and branches to avoid buildup of flammable materials.
- Keep these fire tools handy: a ladder long enough to reach the roof, shovel, rake and water bucket.
- Identify at least two different entrance and exit routes.
- Space landscape vegetation so that fire cannot be carried to the structure or surrounding vegetation.
- Store all combustibles such as firewood, picnic tables and boats well away from structures.
- Connect all garden hoses to an outlet.
- Dispose of stove or fireplace ashes and charcoal briquettes only after soaking them in a metal pail of water.
- Store propane tanks far enough away from buildings for valves to be shut off in case of fire. Keep area around tanks clear of flammable vegetation.

your builder or home improvement store about fire-resistant roofing materials, such as asphalt shingles, metal, cement and

concrete products, or terra-cotta tiles. There are even fire-resistant products that simulate the look of wood shakes!

Windows

Your windows could be another path into your home for flames and burning embers.

Regular plate glass often breaks due to rapid changes in temperature and once the window collapses, flames easy access to your home's interior, reducing the probability that it can be saved.

Although double pane windows with the air space in between the two pieces of glass fare better than single panes, tempered glass is the wiser choice — it outperforms plate glass and is especially useful in larger picture windows. You can easily retrofit your existing windows with tempered glass where they are most likely to be exposed to a wildfire.

Another helpful way to protect your home in the event of a wildfire is to cover windows and skylights with non-flammable screening and shutters. If you do choose this option, always remember to leave an escape route incase your family needs to evacuate the home.

Fire Resistant Plants and Landscaping

Subtle adjustments in plant selection and placement can improve fire safety and meet the needs of the owner and the requirements of the environment. Look for plants with high moisture content. They are more fire resistant than others, creating a firebreak around your home. Also be sure to keep tress and shrubs well pruned and regularly remove highly flammable dead plant materials.

FIRE RESISTANT PLANTS & TREES

- Iris
- Azalea
- Lupine
- Creeping Holly
- Daylilies
- Oregon Boxwood
- Chives
- Birch
- Creeping Phlox
- Walnut
- Periwinkle
- Red Oak
- Evening Primrose

Vents

Many homes have vents allowing air to enter attics and other open spaces. These are another way sparks and embers can find their way inside your home. Cover your exterior attic and underfloor vents with wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from being drawn into your home.

Driveways

Make certain your driveway is well marked and wide enough for fire engines to have easy access— 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet. Make sure there is a turnaround at the house, and that your road is clearly marked.

Decks, Fences, and Other Structures

Decks, porches, fences and outbuildings should be considered part of your home and therefore should get as much attention as the house itself. Applying firewise solutions to these attachments offer an additional level of protection to your home. Consider the following when making improvements outside your house:

- ▲ A flammable wood fence attached to your home greatly increases its potential to ignite. Fences act like fuses or fuel bridges leading a fire right to your house. Construct features, such as fences, with less flammable materials.
- ▲ Don't attach the fence to your home, or consider adding a stone or concrete pillar at the end closest to the house.
- ▲ A trellis is a risk if it is either made of a combustibile flammable material, or covered with flammable vegetation. Try a non-flammable metal trellis.
- ▲ A patio deck can be hazardous in a wildfire area when combustibile materials and debris accumulate beneath it.
- ▲ And, be aware of the hazard of an elevated wooden deck located at the top of a hill— it could be in the direct line of a fire moving up the slope.
- ▲ Finally, make an occasional inspection of your home. Look for deterioration, such as breaks and spaces between roof tiles, warping wood, or cracks and crevices in the structure, where sparks might find a way in.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WILDFIRES, PLEASE VISIT

Sierra Club www.sierraclub.org

Firewise www.firewise.org

National Interagency Fire Center
www.nifc.gov

National Drought Monitor
www.drought.noaa.gov

Information provided by the Sierra Club



www.sierraclub.org

408 C Street, NE • Washington, DC 20002