



# REDUCE YOUR RISK OF WILDFIRE In Just One Weekend



Many Americans each year lose their homes and possessions to the devastation of wildfire. Losses can be minimized if property owners take the time and trouble to implement safeguards to protect their homes. Property owners in the wildland/urban interface zones must resolve to protect their property from wildfire by creating defensible space. Is it worth it? Only you can decide. Remember, the threat of wildfire is real.

## 1. **KEEP YOUR ROOF CLEAN.**

The single most vulnerable part of your home is your roof. Be vigilant and keep it and your rain gutters clean from pine needles, combustible leaves, and other debris than can quickly ignite. Remove dead branches and limbs within 10 feet of your chimney and deck.

## 2. **RATE YOUR ROOF.**

If you have a wood shake roof, consider treatment or replacement to make it more resistive to fire. Install a spark arrester on your chimney of non-flammable material with openings in the mesh no larger than 1/2 inch in diameter. Inspect your spark arrester annually.

## 3. **WHAT IS DEFENSIBLE SPACE? YOU NEED IT!**

Defensible space is a buffer zone between a house and approaching fire where vegetation has been removed or modified to reduce the threat of wildfire. A standard 30 foot distance around your home is the minimum if you're on level ground. Additional clearance as great as 200 feet may be needed as the slope of your lot increases. Defensible space not only reduces the risk of wildfire reaching your home in the critical minutes it takes a fire to pass, but it also provides a space for firefighters to defend your home. During a major wildfire when firefighters and resources are stretched and many homes are at risk, firefighters will focus on homes they can safely defend.

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## REDUCE YOUR RISK OF WILDFIRE—2

### **4. REMOVE FLAMMABLE BRUSH, TREES AND VEGETATION FROM AROUND YOUR HOME.**

Replace flammable landscaping with fire-resistive counterparts. Select plants that are woody, without resin, with high moisture content in leaves, and little or no seasonal accumulation of dead vegetation. Check with a local home and garden center about varieties of vegetation that exhibit fire-resistive traits.

### **5. PRUNE OR REMOVE TREES.**

Be sure to prune or remove low-hanging branches to a height of 6-8 feet above the ground to keep a low-burning fire from climbing up these “fuel ladders.” You don’t want fires climbing into your tree canopies and becoming flame-throwers. If you live in the wildland/urban interface zone and want to assist in reducing wildfire danger in your community, contact your local fire district and ask how you can help. Check with local fire departments for guidelines before removing trees or thinning your property. DO NOT work on someone else’s property without their permission.

### **6. CUT GRASS AND WEEDS ON A REGULAR BASIS.**

During periods of high fire danger, you should mow grasses and low vegetation. Fire spreads quickly in weeds and grasses that are overgrown and dry.

### **7. RECYCLE BRANCHES AND YARD DEBRIS.**

Look into alternative methods of disposal like recycling or composting. Always check with your local fire agency for up-to-date burning regulations before you strike a match. Depending on circumstances, burning could be restricted or not allowed. And burning should only be used as a last resort. Seek safer alternatives.

### **8. RELOCATE BUILDING MATERIALS, WOOD PILES, AND OTHER FLAMMABLE MATERIALS.**

Stack all wood, building debris and other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from any structures. How about that firewood tucked under your front steps? Also, remove flammable vegetation at least 10 feet from piles of wood and debris as an additional safeguard.

## REDUCE YOUR RISK OF WILDFIRE—3

### **9. KEEP YOUR CHIMNEY CLEAN.**

Have your chimney checked twice a year for dangerous buildup of creosote or soot. Have your chimney cleaned at least once a year or whenever it is needed. Keep your dampers in good working order.

### **10. DESIGNATE AN EMERGENCY MEETING PLACE.**

Designate a location outside where family members meet if a fire occurs.

### **11. USE SIGNAGE AND CREATE ACCESS.**

When a wildfire occurs, firefighters may be arriving from all over the country and will not be familiar with your area. Easy to read address numbers on a contrasting background should be posted at your driveway entrance to aid firefighters in finding your home quickly during an emergency. Names of roads should be indicated at all intersections. Each home should have two different entrance and exit routes. Dead-end roads that terminate in a cul-de-sac should have a minimum turn-around radius of 60 feet. Roads should not be in excess of a 12 percent grade so that emergency vehicles can access your property. Bridges must be able to support 30,000 lbs. to accommodate firefighting equipment. All roads leading to your property should be at least 16 feet wide to allow for the entrance of emergency vehicles and the passage of evacuating vehicles.

### **12. DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY WATER SUPPLY.**

Create easy access to your closest emergency water source. Mark all emergency water sources clearly and notify your local fire department of their existence. An emergency water supply could be a community water/hydrant system or cooperative storage tank with neighbors. Swimming pools can serve as an excellent source of additional water. A minimum storage supply of 2,500 gallons per lot can go a long way in helping firefighters defend your home. Locate and make note of any nearby streams, lakes, rivers, or other bodies of water that firefighters can access if needed.

## REDUCE YOUR RISK OF WILDFIRE—4

### 13. HAVE TOOLS FOR FIGHTING FIRE HANDY.

It is fire wise to have the following tools readily available: a shovel, a bucket, a rake, and 100 feet of pre-connected garden hose. You should have a ladder long enough to reach your roof in case of a roof fire. Make sure everyone in your family knows where these items are stored.

### 14. SEEK SAFE STORAGE.

Gasoline and solvents should be stored in approved safety cans away from occupied buildings. LPG tanks should be in an area clear of combustible vegetation and far enough away from buildings for valves to be shut off in case of fire.

## Useful websites for wildfire information:

- ✓ [www.governor.state.az.us/FHC](http://www.governor.state.az.us/FHC)
- ✓ [www.azstatefire.com](http://www.azstatefire.com)
- ✓ [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)
- ✓ [www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/fire)
- ✓ [www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov)
- ✓ [www.fs.fed.us/news/fire](http://www.fs.fed.us/news/fire)

