

Wildland Fire Preparedness

WILDLAND FIRES

The threat of wildland fires for people living near wildland areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas is real. Preparing for wildland fires and protecting structures in the wildland has special challenges. Here are a few things you need to know.

Design and landscape your home with wildfire safety in mind. A distance of 100-150 feet around your home needs a comprehensive landscape approach. Select materials and plants that resist fire rather than fuel it. Use fire resistant or non-combustible materials on the exterior of the dwelling. Or, treat wood or combustible material used in roofs, siding, decking or trim with UL approved fire-retardant chemicals. Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees.

Before:

- Maintain a 30 foot defensible space around your home to act as a fire break.
- Clear a 10 foot area around propane tanks and the barbecue.
- Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish.
- Regularly clean roof and gutters.
- Landscape in zones around your house.
- Rake leaves, dead limbs and twigs. Clear flammable vegetation from around and under structures.
- Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Ask the power company to clear branches from power lines.
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home. Clear combustible materials within 20 feet and use only UL-approved wood burning devices.
- Follow local burning regulations.
- Store flammable materials in approved safety cans.
- Inspect chimneys twice a year. Clean them at least once a year.
- Use 2" mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas and the home itself. Also, screen opening to floors, roof and attic.
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home; in your bedrooms; test monthly and change the batteries twice a year.
- Keep a ladder that will reach the roof.
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes.
- Keep handy household items that can be used as fire tools: a rake, hand saw or chain saw, bucket and shovel.

If time permits, close windows, vents, doors, blinds, and noncombustible window coverings. Remove lightweight curtains. Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights. Close Fireplace damper and screen. Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding glass doors. Turn on a light in each room to increase visibility of your home in heavy smoke. Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals. Turn off propane tanks. Place combustible patio furniture inside. Connect the garden hose to outside taps. Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near above-ground fuel tanks. Wet the roof. Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of the home. Gather fire tools.

When Fire Threatens

- Listen to your radio for reports and evacuation information.
- Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of evacuation. Close doors and windows. Leave the key in the ignition. Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
- Confine pets to one room. Plan for their care if you must evacuate.
- Arrange for temporary housing outside the threatened area.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Tell someone when you are leaving and where you are going.
- If you evacuate your home place a note on the door indicating when you left and where you are going.
- Wear protective clothing -- sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, hat, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Take your disaster supplies kit.
- Lock your home.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.

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