



A Fact Sheet prepared by the National Telecommunications Safety Panel

Introduction

Each year, thousands of acres of land and hundreds of homes are destroyed during a fire season that lasts from May to October, and in some areas all year long. If you are in the foothills, grasslands, or mountains, you're at risk!

The growing population in new communities that were once woodland areas is making wildfires even worse. This rapid growth places even greater strain on local firefighting forces, which can't place a fire engine at every home.

Designing and landscaping structures

- Select materials and plants that can help contain fire rather than fuel it.
- Use fire-resistant or non-combustible materials on the roof and exterior structure of the dwelling, or treat wood or combustible materials used in roofs, siding, decking or trim with UL-approved fire-retardant chemicals.
- Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees. For example, hardwood trees are less flammable than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus, or fir trees.

Protecting your structure

- Regularly clear roof and gutters of pine needles, leaves or other debris.
- Equip chimneys and stovepipes with a non-flammable screen of ½ inch or smaller mesh (contact your local fire department for exact specifications).
- Use ½-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas and the structure itself. Also use this mesh for screen openings to floors, roof and attic.
- Enclose the undersides of balconies and aboveground decks with fire resistive materials.
- Keep items handy that can be used as fire tools: a rake, ax, handsaw or chain saw, bucket and shovel.

Creating a defensible zone

To create a defensible zone, remove all dry grass, brush and dead leaves at least 30 to 100 feet around your structure. Buildings built in pine forests should have a minimum safety zone of 100 feet. If your structure sits on a steep slope, standard protective

measures may not suffice. Contact the local fire department or forestry office for additional information.



Create a defensible zone.

Here are some additional steps to help reduce potential exposure to flames and radiant heat:

- Remove leaves, dead limbs and twigs within the safety zone.
- Mow grass regularly.
- Clear all flammable vegetation and replace native plants with ornamental landscaping plants that are fire resistive.
- Remove leaves and rubbish from under structures.
- Thin a 15-foot space between tree crowns, and remove limbs that are within 10 feet of the ground.
- Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Prune tree branches and shrubs within 10 feet of a stovepipe or chimney outlet.
- Ask the power company to clear branches from power lines.
- Remove vines from the walls of the structure.
- Clear a 10-foot area around fuel tanks.
- Clear combustible material within 10 feet of your structure.

Maintaining an emergency water supply

Maintain an emergency water supply that meets fire department standards, through one of the following:

- A community water/hydrant system.
- A cooperative emergency storage tank with neighbors.

Wildfire, continued.

- Have a contingency plan to make an emergency water supply available on your property.
- Clearly mark all emergency water sources and maintain easy firefighter access to these water sources.
- If your water comes from a well, consider an emergency generator to operate the pump during a power failure.

Taking action when wildfire threatens

If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your battery-operated radio for reports and evacuation information. Follow the instructions of local officials. Remember, personal safety should always come first!

- Back your vehicle in an open space facing the direction of escape.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Know at least two exit routes from your location in case of emergency evacuation.
- It is recommended you wear protective clothing & sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Lock your main building when evacuating.
- Tell someone when you are leaving and where you are going.
- Choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of fire and smoke.
- Close windows, vents, doors or non-combustible window coverings.

Assembling emergency supplies

Make certain you have emergency supplies, recommended by your company, for wildfire events if you have to work in that area.

Additional Information:

Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/adm/comm/nr01-046.htm>

FEMA

<http://www.fema.gov/hazards/fires/wildfires.shtm>

LOWES - Fire and Home Landscape

<http://www.lowes.com/lowes/lkn?action=howTo&p=LawnGarden/FireLandscape.html&rn=RightNavFiles/rightNavLawnGarden>

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