

# BE FIREWISE™ AROUND YOUR HOME

Use these tips to prepare your home and protect your family and pets.



A homeowner's guide for protecting your property from wildfire. The National Firewise Communities Program provides wild-land/urban interface resources for firefighter safety, community planning, landscaping, construction, and maintenance to help protect people, property, and natural resources from wildfire. More information is available from the Firewise website at [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

Seven features of Firewise homes...

INSIDE:

Review these helpful checklists for Firewise Landscaping and Firewise Construction.



## REMINDERS FOR FIREWISE™ LANDSCAPING

**When designing and installing a Firewise landscape, consider the following:**

Local area fire history • Site location and overall terrain • Prevailing winds and seasonal weather • Property contours and boundaries • Native vegetation • Plant characteristics and placement (duffage, water and salt retention ability, aromatic oils, fuel load per area, and size) • Irrigation requirements • Give yourself added protection with "fuel breaks" like driveways, gravel walkways, and lawns •

**To create a Firewise landscape, the primary goal is fuel reduction.** To this end, initiate the zone concept. Zone 1 is closest to the structure; Zones 2-4 move progressively further away.

**Zone 1:** This well-irrigated area encircles the structure for at least 30 feet on all sides, providing space for fire suppression equipment in the event of an emergency. Plantings should be limited to carefully spaced low flammability species.

**Zone 2:** Low flammability plant materials should be used here. Plants should be low-growing and the irrigation system should extend into this section.

**Zone 3:** Place low-growing plants and well-spaced trees in this area, remembering to keep the volume of vegetation (fuel) low.

**Zone 4:** This furthest zone from the structure is a natural area. Selectively prune and thin all plants and remove highly flammable vegetation.



**When maintaining a landscape:**

- Mow the lawn regularly, and dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- Be sure the irrigation system is well maintained.
- Use care when refueling garden equipment; maintain equipment regularly; store flammable liquids properly.
- Become familiar with local regulations regarding vegetation clearances, disposal of debris, and fire safety requirements for equipment.

## REMINDERS FOR FIREWISE™ CONSTRUCTION

**When constructing, renovating, or adding to a Firewise home, consider the following:**

- Choose a Firewise location.
- Design and build a Firewise structure with fire resistant materials.
- Employ Firewise landscaping and maintenance.

**To select a Firewise location, observe the following:**

- Slope of terrain; be sure to build on the most level portion of the land, since fire spreads more rapidly on even minor slopes.
- Set your one-story structure at least 30 feet back from any ridge or cliff; increase distance if your home will be higher than one story.

**In designing and building your Firewise structure, the primary goals are fuel and exposure reduction. Therefore:**

- Use construction materials that are fire-resistant or non-combustible whenever possible.
- For roof construction, consider using materials such as Class-A asphalt shingles, slate or clay tile, metal, cement and concrete products, or terra-cotta tiles. A fire-resistant sub-roof can also add protection.
- On exterior wall facing, fire-resistive stucco or masonry may be much better choices than vinyl, which can soften and melt.
- Window materials and size are important. Smaller panes hold up better in their frames than larger ones. Double pane glass and tempered glass are more reliable and effective heat barriers than single pane glass. Plastic skylights can melt.
- Install non-flammable shutters on windows and skylights.
- To prevent sparks from entering your home through vents, cover exterior attic and under-floor vents with wire screening no larger than 1/8-inch mesh.
- Provide at least two ground-level doors for easy and safe exit, and at least two means of escape (i.e., doors or windows) in each room so that everyone has a way out.

**Any structures attached to the house, such as decks, porches, fences, and outbuildings should be considered part of the house. These structures can act as fuel bridges, particularly if constructed from flammable materials.**

**Therefore, consider the following:**

- If you wish to attach an all-wood fence to your house, use masonry or metal as protective barriers between the fence and house.
- Use metal when constructing a trellis and cover it with high-moisture, low flammability vegetation.

- Prevent combustible materials and debris from accumulating beneath patio decks or elevated porches. Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire screening no larger than 1/8-inch mesh.
- Make sure an elevated wooden deck is not located at the top of a hill where it will be in direct line of a fire moving up-slope. Consider a terrace instead.



Firewise website visitors can view streaming video and also download checklists, school educational materials, and other information. Visitors can browse an extensive list of helpful links and use a searchable library of national, state, and local documents on a wide range of wildland safety issues. Visitors can also find their state Firewise Communities liaison to contact for assistance in hazard mitigation and planning.



For more information contact:  
FIREWISE COMMUNITIES  
1 Batterymarch Park  
Quincy, MA 02169  
[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

**1****HOME IGNITION ZONE**

The Home Ignition Zone begins with at least 30 feet of space immediately around the home and extending out as far as 100 to 200 feet depending on the characteristics of the surrounding forests or grasslands. Creating and maintaining the Home Ignition Zone reduces or eliminates ignition hazards presented by vegetation (by thinning or spacing, removing dead leaves and needles and pruning shrubs and tree branches) and combustible construction (wooden porches, decks, storage sheds, outbuildings, swing sets and fences).

**WHY? Reducing ignition hazards improves the chances that the structure will survive a wildfire...**

**2****LEAN, CLEAN, AND GREEN LANDSCAPING**

With Firewise landscaping, you can create survivable space around your home that reduces your wildfire threat. Prune large trees so that the lowest branches are at least 6 to 10 feet high to prevent a fire on the ground from spreading to the tree tops. Within the Home Ignition Zone, remove flammable plants that contain resins, oils, and waxes that burn readily: ornamental junipers, pauon, holly, red cedar, and young pine. A list of less-flammable plants can be obtained from your local state forester, forestry office, county extension office, or landscape specialist.

**WHY? Although mulch does help retain soil moisture, mulch and other landscape materials can become flammable when too dry...**

**3****FIRE-RESISTANT ROOF CONSTRUCTION**

Firewise roof construction materials include Class-A asphalt shingles, metal, slate or clay tile, and concrete products. The inclusion of a fire-resistant subroof adds protection. Make a periodic inspection looking for deterioration such as breaks and spaces between roof tiles. Keep the roof, gutters, and eaves clear of leaves and other debris. Make sure under-eave and soffit vents are as close as possible to the roof line. Box in eaves, but be sure to provide adequate ventilation to prevent condensation and mildew.

**WHY? Something as simple as making sure that your gutters, eaves, and roof are clear of debris will reduce your fire threat...**



**A FIREWISE HOME HAS THESE SEVEN FEATURES**

Be sure to reduce the ignition hazards on your property to the extent of the Home Ignition Zone (100-200 feet).

For more information, visit the web site [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

**4****FIRE-RESISTANT ATTACHMENTS**

Attachments include any structure connected to your home, such as decks, porches, or fences. If these items attached to a home are *not* fire-resistant, then the home as a whole is vulnerable to ignition.

**5****FIRE-RESISTANT CONSTRUCTION**

Wall materials that resist heat and flames include brick, cement, plaster, stucco, and concrete masonry. Tempered and double-pane glass windows can make a home more resistant to wildfire heat and flames. For more information, see the Firewise Construction Checklist on the other side.

**WHY? Firebrands (embers) collect in small nooks and crannies and ignite combustible materials...**

**6****A DISASTER PLAN**

The time to plan for any emergency is prior to the event. Take time to discuss with your family what actions you will take. Post emergency telephone numbers in a visible place. Leave before it is too late. Decide where you will go and how you will get there. Have tools available (shovel, rake, axe, handsaw, or chain saw). Maintain an emergency water source. Have a plan for your pets. Practice family fire drills.

**WHY? The need to evacuate can occur without notice. When wildfire conditions exist, be ready to take action...**

**7****EMERGENCY ACCESS**

Identify your home and neighborhood with legible and clearly marked street names and numbers. Include a driveway that is at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet and a slope of less than 5 percent to provide access to emergency vehicles.

**WHY? So emergency personnel can rapidly find the location of the emergency...**

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