

## FIREFIGHTERS NEED YOUR HELP!



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)



Review these helpful checklists for Firewise Landscaping and Firewise Construction.

INSIDE:  
Seven features of Firewise homes...

# BE FIREWISE™ AROUND YOUR HOME

## 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.



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