



Wildcat Community Inc.
A Firewise/USA Community
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Firewise Strategies for Protecting Property from Wildland Fires

Wildfire is a constant threat to this community. However there are steps we can take to help protect us from the damage wildfire can cause. The strategies listed below come from the U.S. Forest Service, the Georgia Forest Commission, and the Firewise/USA organization. The recommendations suggest strategies for landscape fuel reduction and structure ignitability reduction that will protect homes and land. You may not want to implement all the strategies. Aesthetics, covenants, zoning regulations, cost and other factors may influence your selection of strategies to implement. However, implementing as many strategies as possible will reduce the danger from fire.

Sources of danger from wildfire.

The greatest danger from wildfire to structures does not come from the fire flames. Well after the flames have passed embers will smolder and generate sufficient heat to ignite a structure. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, embers from wildfire present the greatest danger to structures. As a result of the winds that accompany wildfires, embers can originate from as far away as 6 miles or as close as the vegetation surrounding your home. Protecting your home from embers will do much to reduce the possibility of a disaster.

If fire comes close to a structure, the flames also present danger. There are two types of threats from wildfire: direct and indirect. A direct threat results from vegetation or other material near your home that creates a flame which actually touches a part of the structure. Flammable material also presents an indirect threat. It may create high temperatures that ignite your home without flames actually touching the structure.

The recommended strategies will reduce the effects of both flame- and ember-generated fire.

1. Create a Defensible Space Around Your Home

Defensible space provides two means for protecting property. One, it will retard the movement of fire towards structures by reducing the amount of fuel available to a fire. Second, it provides space for fire fighters to gain access to all sides of your property and home.

- Remove flammable materials away from house.
 - Remove dead limbs, leaves, and other ground litter within 30 feet around structures.
 - Use fire resistant plants for landscaping.

- Prune branches from trees within the defensible space to a height of 6 feet above the ground. Also remove or prune shrubs to less than six feet from tree limbs, small trees, or other potential "ladder fuels" from beneath large trees; left in place, these can carry a ground fire into tree crowns.
- Mow dry grasses and weeds to a height of 2" or less and keep well watered, especially during periods of high fire danger.
- Maintain an irrigated greenbelt immediately around your home using fire resistant planting material.
- Avoid pine straw, bark or wood chip mulch around structures. Use gravel and rock or other noncombustible material.
- Remove limbs that extend over your roof or those directly above or within 10 feet laterally of a chimney.

2. Protect Structures

- Mark the entrance to your property with a sign showing your address numbers that can be easily seen and read by emergency services personnel.
- Keep firefighting equipment handy including fire extinguishers, buckets, shovels, rakes, hose and ladders that reach to your roof. Inspect fire extinguishers annually and replace when necessary.
- Store combustibles such as firewood and stacked lumber away from your home as far as practical. Fuel, paint and solvents should be maintained in appropriate containers and away from any ignition source.
- Use fire retardant on wood siding, decks, and roofs.
- Prevent combustible materials and debris including leaves from accumulating beneath decks or elevated porches.
- Clear roof and gutters of pine needles and leaves to eliminate an ignition source for embers.
- Keep area around the propane tank clear of flammable vegetation.
- Enclose eaves and put metal screens with 1/8 inch openings on vents.
- Have chimneys inspected and cleaned annually, and install spark arresters.
- Inspect your home regularly. Repair or caulk breaks and spaces between roof tiles, warping wood, and cracks and crevices in the foundation where embers can gather.
- Install screens over glass exposed to the outside. Use screen with 1/8 inch opening to prevent embers from entering structure if glass breaks.
- Enclose under decks and house foundation with fire resistant material.
- Learn how to turn off propane and electric service in case of an emergency.

For more information or to request a Firewise analysis of your property contact: Dennis LaGatta, info@wildcatcommunityga.org.