PROTECTING YOUR HOME MEANS PLANNING AHEAD

DURING WILDFIRE

MAKE YOUR HOME SWEET HOME

THE SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOME FIREWISE

WILDFIRES ARE A FACT OF LIFE IN IDAHO. KNOWING THE FACTS CAN HELP YOU LIVE SAFELY WITH FIRE.

The threat of wildfires is a fact of life in the wildland urban interface, but you are not helpless against it. There are many steps you can take that may help protect your family and home from fire.

1. Have an emergency plan. Decide in advance where everyone in your household, including pets, will go if you have to leave or cannot return to your home. Plan two possible evacuation routes ahead of time. Make sure everyone in your household knows how they will get to the shelters location. Designate an off-site emergency contact who is accessible to everyone in your household.

2. Make sure your roof and siding are fire-resistant. In order for objects to ignite, they must meet the requirements of combustion; fuel, oxygen, and heat. Wildfires, by nature, are hot and can carry embers from your chimney or burning bushes to start new fires. Preventing new fires and stopping the spread of fire is a primary objective in the wide landscape of the wildland urban interface. Limiting ignitability will assist firefighters in the event that they do need to get to your property.

3. Determine how much defensible space is recommended for your home. Defensible space is an area around your structure without flammable vegetation. The size of this area will depend on the height of the vegetation in your area. For this reason, the size of the area for defensible space must be adjusted upward, depending on the type of vegetation. If your lot is flat, the distance may need to be increased to 200 feet. If the property line is closer than the recommended distance, clear to the property line.

4. Create a 5 foot non-flammable area immediately adjacent to your home. Aside from the roof, this area protects the highest wildlife risk. Limit this area to low growing, well-watered, fire-resistant plants. Keep this area free of combustible materials such as wood bark and debris.

5. Use gravel, stones, brick, or other non-flammable material in your landscape. Rocks, sand, and gravel can provide a natural-looking, low-maintenance, and water-efficient landscape and act as a barrier that is resistant to wild fires. Create islands of vegetation interspersed with non-flammable materials, such as rocks, gravel or concrete in a “herringbone” pattern, so fire does not have a path to your house. Also consider encircling the propane tank with gravel.

6. Replace hazardous vegetation with more fire-resistant plants. Plants that are considered “fire-resistant” are those that have a high moisture content in their leaves. This means cambium of dead vegetation, a low and compact growth form, high sap or salt content, green stems, and a fire-resistant bark. Choose deciduous trees for planting near your home. The sap from evergreen trees acts as a further wildfire. Deciduous plants burn more slowly. Also consider replacing native grasses with less flammable native grasses and wildflowers where possible.

7. Provide adequate horizontal and vertical spacing between trees and shrubs. Wildfire experts believe that having a minimum of 15 feet between trees and shrubs, space them far enough apart to slow the spread of an approaching wildfire, and remove dead vegetation that could be used to feed the fire. It is also recommended that you remove any tree in the 6 to 10 foot range closer than the recommended distance, clear to the property line. If the property line is closer than this amount can weaken the tree and make it more susceptible to insect and disease infections.

8. Maintain landscaping, including regular irrigation, pruning, moving, raking, weeding, and dead plant removal. Fire causes extensive damage to trees and shrubs. Remove dead or dry vegetation, including dead shrubs, dead grass, fallen branches, and accumulations of leaves and twigs. Remove grass in a fire-resistant manner using a garden hose or fire-resistant material. Keep this area free of combustible materials such as wood bark and debris.

9. Replace all combustible materials from roofs and gutters, as well as under decks, stairways, and overhangs. This will prevent heat from getting trapped and embers from entering these areas. Also consider enclosing the area under decks, stairways, and overhangs with 16 inch wire mesh.

10. Make sure all first floor windows are made of non-flammable, reflective material. Keep the bottom half of first floor windows well away from your home or any other structure. Firewood should be stored out of sight, well away from your home. Make sure your chimney has an approved spark arrestor. Firewood should be stored away from your home. Keep a supply of fire extinguishers and other fire fighting equipment on hand.

11. Store fire extinguishers and fire tools handy at all times. A shovel, rake, ladders, and 30 feet of attached hose can be used to extinguish fire-bridges and spot fires on and around your home. Protect yourself too. Wear leather gloves, sturdy boots, and wool or cotton clothing.

12. Make sure your home’s address and street signs are visible from the road, and made of non-combustible, reflective material. Your address will assist firefighters in getting to your property. In order for emergency vehicles to be able to access your driveway, it should be at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 13 feet.

13. Store firewood well away from your home or any other structure. Firewood should be stored out of sight, well away from your home. Make sure your chimney has an approved spark arrestor. Firewood should be stored away from your home. Keep a supply of fire extinguishers and other fire fighting equipment on hand.

14. Make sure your chimney has an approved spark arrestor. Early fall is the critical time for wildfires from lightning strikes. Spark from your chimney can cause a neighbor’s house (or yours) to ignite. Also, have your chimney inspected and cleaned at least once a year, and keep a supply of fire extinguishers on hand.
BE FIREWISE.

**STEP 1**
Have an emergency plan.

**STEP 2**
Roofing and siding should be fire-resistant.

**STEP 3**
Determine how much defensible space you need, 30 feet or more on all sides of a structure.

**STEP 4**
Create a 5-foot non-flammable area immediately adjacent to your home that is free of combustibles.

**STEP 5**
Use gravel, stone, brick, or other non-flammable material in your landscape.

**STEP 6**
Landscape with native wildflowers and fire-resistant plants.

**STEP 7**
Space your shrubs and trees adequately.

**STEP 8**
Maintain your landscaping.

**STEP 9**
Remove combustible materials from roofs, gutters, and under decks, stairways, and overhangs.

**STEP 10**
First floor windows should be made of double-paned glass.

**STEP 11**
Always have a fire extinguisher and other fire tools handy.

**STEP 12**
Make sure your chimney has an approved spark arrester.

**STEP 13**
Store firewood away from your home.

**STEP 14**
Make sure your home address is clearly visible from the road.

**BEING PREPARED IS YOUR BEST DEFENSE.**

Statistics show that recovering from a wildfire is 15 times more expensive than preparing for one. Protecting your home from wildfire is a matter of planning ahead and taking the steps outlined above. While no home is fireproof, these precautions will greatly increase the chances that your property will escape serious damage in the event of a wildfire.

To learn more about Idaho Firewise, please visit www.idahofirewise.org