

Wildfire Protection Begins At Home

effectively protecting homes and communities

Protecting lives, property and communities should be the Forest Service's top fire management priority.

Protecting the Home

The protection of a home depends entirely on treatment of the *home ignition zone* — the home itself and the area within 60 meters (200 feet) of the home. This is necessary to protect the house from the various forms of ignition present during forest fires, regardless of what steps are taken in the adjacent forest.

In fact, the best available science from the Forest Service's Fire Sciences Lab reveals that a home's ability to survive a wildfire can be increased by over 90% by simply installing a non-flammable roof, relocating flammables such as woodpiles and propane tanks away from the home and reducing vegetation within the 60 meter *home ignition zone*. For more specific information, visit www.firewise.org.

Protecting the Community

The effective protection of communities from the threat of wildfire depends upon the proper treatment of the *community protection zone*, the area directly adjacent to homes and communities.

While debate over wildfires and home protection have largely centered around the management of National Forest lands, **nearly 85% of the land within the Community Protection Zone is state, tribal or private.**¹

In addition to taking the steps outlined above to protect homes, a community should take steps to reduce flammable vegetation within a maximum of 500 meters from a community's inhabited structures to provide community protection and ensure firefighter safety.

Investments within the *home ignition zone* and *community protection zone* will not only effectively reduce home losses associated with wildfires, but they will also be far less expensive than unnecessarily spending billions of dollars perpetually thinning the forested landscape.

Will Thinning the Wildland Protect Homes?

Some people are advocating that we protect homes and communities from wildfire by increasing logging on National Forest lands far from homes and communities. Unfortunately, such claims are not backed up by the best available science.

According to Jack Cohen, research scientist with the Forest Service's Fire Sciences Lab in Montana and the nation's leading expert on home ignitions, "The evidence suggests that wildland fuel reduction for reducing home losses may be inefficient and ineffective. Inefficient because wildland fuel reduction for several hundred meters or more around homes is greater than necessary for reducing ignitions from flames. Ineffective because it does not sufficiently reduce firebrand ignitions."²



On the Bitterroot National Forest in Montana the Forest Service is logging these large trees under the guise of "fuel reduction" and "community protection" despite the fact that this timber sale is 10 miles from the nearest community. Additionally, in a 2000 Report to the President, the Department of Agriculture and Interior found that "The removal of large, merchantable trees from forests does not reduce fire risk and may, in fact, increase such risk."

For more information about these important issues and to learn more about a proposal for protecting homes and communities, please contact Matthew Koehler with the Native Forest Network at (406) 542-7343 or koehler@wildrockies.org.

¹ The Wilderness Society, March 11, 2003. Communities at Risk from Wildfire: How Much is on Federal land?

² Cohen, Jack D. 1999. Reducing the wildland fire threat to homes: where and how much? Proceedings of the symposium on fire economics, planning, and policy: bottom lines. USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Research Station. Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-173. Pgs. 189-195.

Creating Safescapes: *Preparing for wildfire*

While wildfires are an essential and natural part of healthy forest and grassland ecosystems, they are increasingly affecting homes and communities as more people choose to live in the wildland-urban interface.

Fortunately, fire scientists and researchers know exactly what people can do to effectively protect their homes from the threat of wildfire. Within the *home ignition zone* – the home itself and the area within 60 meters (200 feet) of the home – researchers recommend taking the following simple actions.

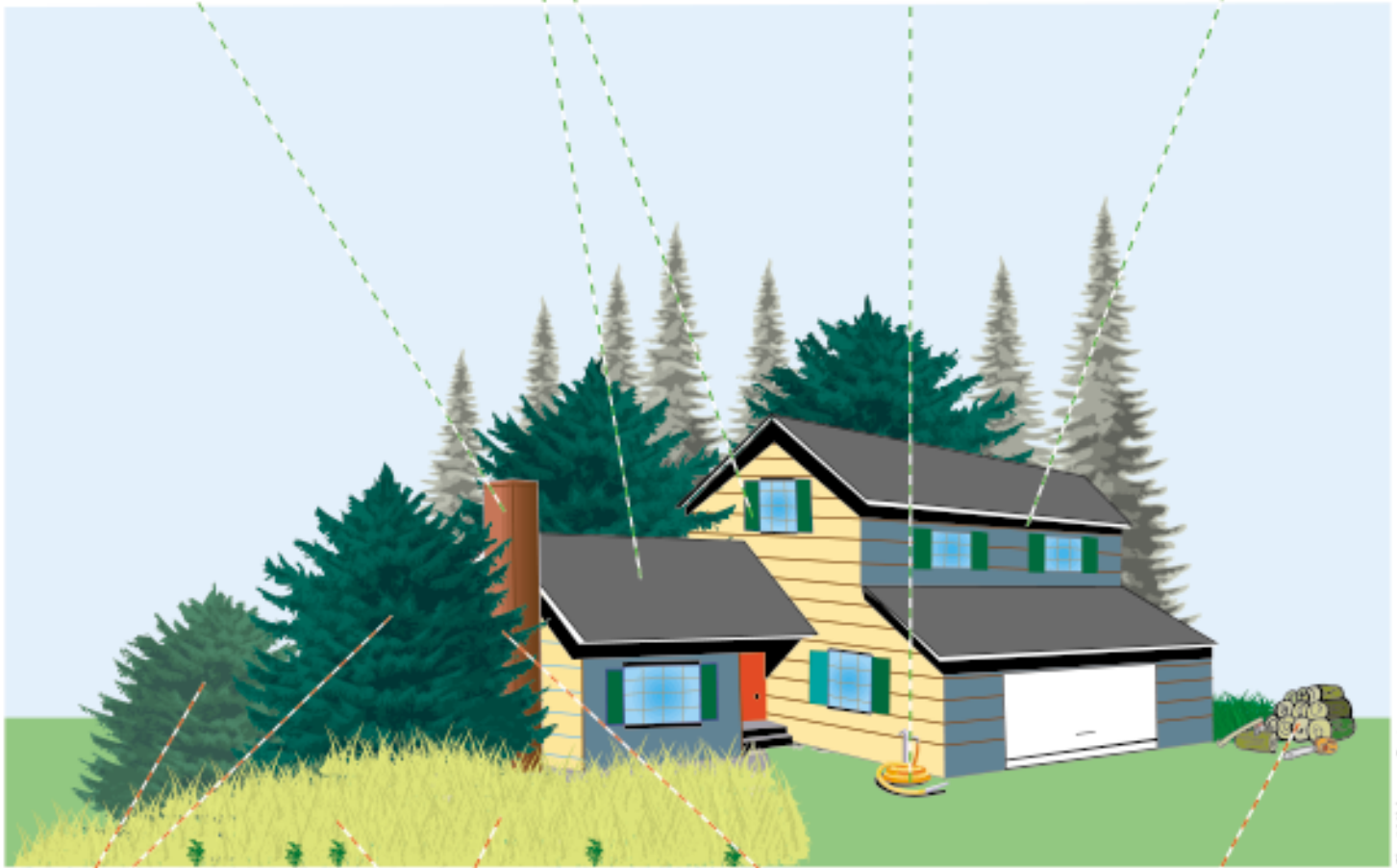
To learn more about effectively protecting homes and communities from wildfire, visit www.firewise.org.

SAFE: Clean and inspect your chimney. Do this at least once per year!

SAFE: Use fire-resistant building materials such as metal or slate when building or remodeling - particularly for your roof or shutters.

SAFE: Keep a garden hose that is long enough to reach any area of your home and any other structures on your property.

SAFE: Clean your roof and gutters. Do this regularly!



UNSAFE: Highly flammable firs, evergreens and eucalyptus trees are too close to the house. Landscape your property with less-flammable, fire-resistant plants such as hardwood trees.

UNSAFE: Unmowed grass and dry vegetation in the safety zone can provide a fire path right to your home. Keep an eye out and remove twigs, dead limbs, leaves and needles regularly.

UNSAFE: Tree limbs and shrubs should not be within 15 feet of a stove-pipe or chimney outlet. Prune shrubs next to your home, removing over-growth and dry leaves or branches.

UNSAFE: Firewood is stacked too close to the house. Stack it at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home.