

SAFETY SENSE

Tips For Saving Lives And Property From Wildfires

(NAPSA)—Learning about the reality of wildfire danger can help save your home and those you love.

According to experts, wildfires across the country are burning hotter and faster than ever before. After a severe 1985 fire season that saw 1,400 homes burned nationally, the National Fire Protection Association, through an agreement with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Association of State Foresters, created the Firewise Program—to offer simple ways by which community members can work together to prevent their properties from becoming fuel for a wildfire.

“By learning about how wildfires spread and taking simple steps to reduce damage, we can adapt to the inevitability of wildfire danger,” said Michele Steinberg, Firewise Program Manager in Quincy, Mass. “Wildfires do not have to burn everything in their paths. You can prepare your home simply and effectively.”

Residents can reduce the risk of their home’s ignition by simply modifying their homes and immediate surroundings. For example, to make a home’s landscape Firewise, create space around the home to reduce wildfire threat. Reduce vegetation surrounding a home (30-100 feet, depending on the area’s risk of wildfire) and prune large trees so that the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet high to prevent a wildfire from spreading up to the treetops. When planting, choose low-growing, carefully placed shrubs and trees so the area can also be more easily maintained. Even something as simple as cleaning gutters and eaves of leaves and debris can prevent an ember from igniting a home.



Homeowners can minimize the risk of damage by a wildfire if they modify their homes and immediate surroundings.

Also, when possible, choose Firewise construction materials for homes, decks, porches and fences. The most protective roofing materials will be rated “Class-A,” including asphalt shingles and metal, cement and concrete products. Wall materials most resistant to heat and flames include brick, cement, plaster, stucco and concrete masonry. Double-paned or tempered glass windows also make a home more resistant to heat and flames.

Our increasingly damaging wildfire seasons may be caused by rising temperatures that in turn create drier wildfire fuels such as scrub, grass and brush. Also, millions of people are moving into formerly rural and wild areas vulnerable to wildfire, which presents added challenges for firefighters.

For more information on taking real action to reduce wildfire damage in your community, visit www.firewise.org.