

COULD YOUR
MONTANA HOME
SURVIVE A

WILDFIRE?



Produced by the Tri-County Fire Working Group

If a fire is burning in the wildlands near your home, it is very possible the fire will come your way. A wildfire a few miles away can, under certain circumstances, reach your property in a matter of a few hours or less. But, a good fuelbreak removes fuel from a spreading wildfire, slowing the fire enough for firefighters to take suppression action.

If you landscape properly, you can have a fire-safe and attractive home. Just remember that grass, brush, small trees, low branches, and limbs are fuels that carry a ground fire up the sides of a house. If you don't make your house and property fire-safe, you could be defenseless. Clear your property of debris and fire-proof your house, and you'll have a much safer place to live.

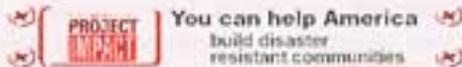
For more information or help, contact your local wildland or structural fire agency.



The Tri-County
Fire Working Group

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

- ◆ Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- ◆ U.S. Forest Service
- ◆ Lewis & Clark County Rural Fire Council
- ◆ Helena Fire Department
- ◆ Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office
- ◆ Montana Prescribed Fire Services
- ◆ State Farm Insurance - Donald Thomas Agency
- ◆ Flame Safe of the Rockies
- ◆ Lewis and Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services
- ◆ Jefferson County Disaster & Emergency Services
- ◆ Broadwater County Disaster & Emergency Services



For more information on wildfires and protecting your home, check out the information at : www.firewise.org

IF YOU COULD KEEP YOUR HOME FROM BURNING, YOU WOULD. *WOULDN'T YOU?* BY FOLLOWING THE SUGGESTIONS IN THIS PAMPHLET, YOU CAN HELP PROTECT NOT ONLY YOUR HOME, BUT ALSO THE PRECIOUS FOREST OR GRASSLANDS THAT SURROUND IT.



As long as there are wildlands, there will be wild fires. Fire plays a natural role in the ecology of forests and rangelands, and homeowners should expect fire to occur in their neighboring wildlands. When you build your home in the interface – the area where wildland fuels meet urban/rural settlements – you should design and landscape with fire safety in mind. If you build adjacent to range and forested lands and you do not provide any kind of fuelbreak, your home could be nothing more than additional fuel to be consumed by the fire. But, you can take measures to reduce risk and make your home fire-safe. Don't let your home be a statistic!

These recent fires in the Tri-County Area all resulted in private property being destroyed, evacuations, and homes threatened. When and where will the next fire strike?

Buck Snort Fire (2000): Canyon Ferry Lake, 14,500 acres, human-caused

Cave Gulch Fire (2000): NE of Helena, 29,200 acres, human-caused

High Ore Road & Boulder Hill Fires (2000): 10,500+ & 2,600+ acres, cause unknown

Little Hellgate Fire (1999): 200 acres, arson-caused

Hauser Dam Fire (1999): Canyon Ferry Lake, 220 acres, campfire-caused

Willow Creek Fire (1997): Augusta, 2,000 acres, debris burning-caused

Lower Coxe Fire (1996): North end Canyon Ferry Lake, 425 acres, campfire-caused

Angus Fire (1996): Broadwater County, 2,100 acres, lightning-caused

Cavern Fire (1996): Lewis and Clark Caverns, 150 acres, cigarette-caused

Indian Creek (1995): Townsend, 50 acres, campfire-caused

Valley #1 Fire (1994): Helena Valley, 50 acres, fireworks-caused

Dearborn River (1992): 1,300 acres, debris burning-caused

Beartooth (1990): Beartooth Game Range, 33,000 acres, started from a camp stove



For those of you planning to build your home in the wildlands, you should consider a few fire prevention suggestions when selecting a site and when building. Consider these guidelines before you complete the plans for your new home:

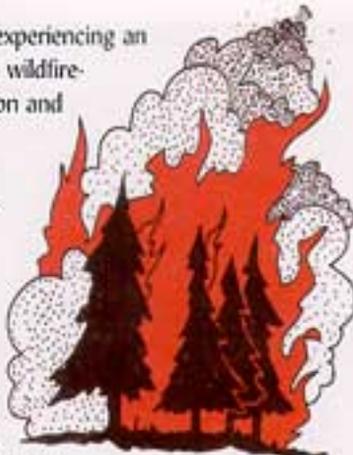
1. Avoid lots on dead-end roads and with poor access.
2. It is best not to build in a gully or ravine.
3. If the land on which you are building slopes, you'll need more than a 30-foot "safety zone" on the lower side. Fire travels sixteen times faster uphill than downhill.
4. Develop a water source, such as a small pond, cistern, well, or hydrant. If the electricity fails, a gasoline-powered water pump would be a home saver. Don't forget the hoses and nozzles!
5. Have power lines installed underground.
6. Construct your roof out of fire-resistant material. Avoid wood shingles.
7. Build a water standpipe away from your home, and keep a hose available.

These suggestions are only a few of a much more specific list of things you can do to make your home fire-safe. When you live in the wildland interface of Montana, this information applies to you.

You might also help yourself out by following these recommendations:

1. Keep rakes, hoes, axes, and shovels handy for use in fighting a small fire around your home.
2. Plan a fire escape route to safe areas, such as meadows, rock outcrops, and wide roads.
3. Talk to your neighbors so they'll learn how to reduce risk and become fire-safe too. Helpful information can spread even faster than a fire.

Montana is experiencing an increase in wildfire-related destruction and evacuations of homes because more people are living in the interface. This desire to build on scenic sites in Montana's wildlands results in a combination of residential properties



intermingled with highly flammable vegetation. When people build homes and landscape property, they seldom consider the threat of fire. And, as more people are attracted to Montana's forests and prairies, the probability of destructive fire increases.

As an urban/rural/wildland dweller, you can reduce risk and begin to make your home fire-safe by following certain guidelines:

YOUR PROPERTY

1. Create a safety zone around your home by keeping weeds, pine needles, and debris 10 feet from your home and by clearing brush back at least 30 feet. Trees should be individually spaced within a distance equal to the height of the two tallest trees around your home. Prune trees in this area to a height of 10 feet. If your home is on a slope, the "safety zone" should be larger than 30 feet.



BEFORE

- ◆ Thin and prune trees.
- ◆ Mow grass and remove brush.
- ◆ Move firewood away from house.
- ◆ Clean leaves from roof and rain gutter.
- ◆ Screen chimneys and incinerators.
- ◆ Construct roof out of fire-resistant material; avoid wood shingles.

AFTER



2. Keep tree branches at least 15 feet away from chimneys or stovepipes.

3. Stack firewood on a contour away from buildings. Keep kindling in a separate place.

4. Make sure branches are not touching power lines.

5. Remove forest slash and debris from your property.

6. Display your name and house number in front of your property to assist firefighters in locating your home.

7. Make sure your driveway is spacious enough for fire vehicles. Provide a second way out or an alternate escape route.



8. Clear a 10-foot area around your barbecue and put a metal screen over the grill.

9. Provide a non-combustible container for hot ashes away from structures and vegetation. Never store ashes in combustible bags or boxes in or near your home.

YOUR HOUSE

1. Use fire-resistant materials such as asphalt or fiberglass shingles on your roof. If you insist on shake or wood shingle roofing, use the pressure-treated type. Existing, untreated wood roofing should be treated every two to three years with fire retardant to maintain safety.

2. Keep your roof and gutters clear of pine needles and leaves.

3. Equip your chimney or stovepipe with a mesh spark arrester.

4. Enclose overhanging decks and open foundations to keep out hot embers. (Fire metal screen is sufficient.)

5. Install a fine screen over all vents to keep embers out.

6. Clean your storage area. Keep flammable liquids in unbreakable containers.

7. Install smoke detectors.

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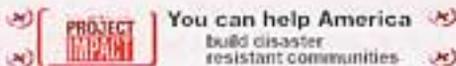
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