



Florida Department
of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
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Protect Your Home and Property

Communities face special problems when homes are built in or adjacent to forests or wildlands. In their quest to live close to nature, homeowners sometimes overlook the reality that nearby wildlands can catch fire and burn.

The Florida Firewise Communities program seeks to reduce the loss of homes that are located in what is called the wildland/urban interface. The Firewise Communities program doesn't try to discourage people from building in the wildland/urban interface. Instead, its goal is to teach people how to plan, build and maintain homes so that the home can survive a wildfire without the intervention of a fire department.

There are a number of things that homeowners can do to substantially increase the chances that their home will survive a wildfire. Most importantly, homeowners must become partners with fire-protection agencies and assume a greater role in creating and maintaining a defensible home site.

Tips for homeowners to help protect their home from wildfire

- Create a "defensible space" of at least 30 feet around their house. Within this area, grass should be mowed regularly and widely spaced plants with high moisture content should be given priority.
- Prune tree limbs within the defensible space to a height of 15 feet so lower limbs will not become ladder fuels that can carry a fire to the roof or soffits.
- Keep the roof and gutters free of accumulated leaves so the roof cannot be set afire by firebrands or embers carried by the wind.
- Keep a shovel, rake and ladder in a readily accessible location, and 50 to 100 feet of garden hose attached to an outside faucet.
- Make sure the home address is clearly visible at the street or road on a non-combustible sign so firefighters can quickly find the home in an emergency.
- Keep tree limbs at least 15 feet away from chimney outlets.
- Replace wood shingle or wood shake roofs with fire-retardant shingles, metal or tile roofs.

For more information about protecting your home from wildfire, call your local Florida Division of Forestry office.