

Spring Firewise Article

Spring is approaching. Even though it is hard to imagine when looking outside at window sill high snowdrifts. But, winter is the time to develop your defense plan for the approaching wildfire season. Believe it or not, spring time, before green up, is our most vulnerable time for fire. Are you prepared?

Scientific Fact: A high percentage of homes lost in a wildfire are not caused by the wall of fire sweeping thru an area, but, by the embers from that fire, that will land, smolder and ignite in a combustible area near or on your home. Embers can travel over a mile or more in a high wind situation.

Here's a Top Ten checklist to improve your structures wildfire resiliency :

Remove all dead vegetation, pine needles and dried leaves from gutters, roof tops and within 30 feet of your buildings foundations.

Move firewood piles 30 feet away from your buildings.

Remove evergreen branches on or within at least 10 feet of your siding, deck, porch, roof or chimney stack

Within 30 feet of your buildings prune evergreen trees up to six to ten feet from the ground, for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height. Thin or remove all small diameter balsam trees within 30 feet of all structures.

Clear vegetation from under and around stationary propane tanks. Keep propane tanks full.

Make sure your address sign is made out of reflective material and is clearly visible from all approaches to your property.

Remove combustible materials from carports, crawl spaces, decks and elevated porches. Place 1/8" metal mesh screening between low profile decks/porches and crawl spaces to block embers and combustible materials from collecting underneath.

Make sure eaves and soffit vents are also covered with 1/8" metal mesh and are in good repair, to prevent embers from entering your building.

Make sure the access to your property is cleared of trees and over hanging branches at a minimum of 14 feet wide and 14 feet high. This is for safe access for Emergency personnel and their vehicles which include ambulances and fire trucks.

Within 0 to 5 feet of your structure's foundations have non combustible materials and/or low flammable vegetation. Keep all grass/vegetation well watered thru out season.

If you are interested in more things you can do to help your community be more wildfire resilient check out the MN DNR Firewise website <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/firewise/livingwithfire/space.html> or contact your local Fire Department and/or St. Louis County Firewise Coordinator, Gloria Erickson, 218-365-0878.