

UI Extension Forestry Information Series

Is Your Property Safe From Wildfire?

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Fire is an important natural process of forests and rangelands. But while fire plays an important role in the ecology of these areas, it can be devastating if homes, valuable timber, and range areas are destroyed. Many of us in Idaho have homes and/or property that are wooded or adjacent to rangelands. In the hot, dry days of summer, a wildfire is something that should be anticipated, not unexpected. And anticipating wildfire is the first step to making your property as fire-safe as possible.

Probably one of the most important things you can do to save your home and property from wildfire is to know who your local fire protection agency is. If you don't know, your local the Idaho Department of Lands office to find out.

Most likely you will have a road to get to and from your property. These roads also provide access for fire equipment and escape routes should the need arise. At least two ways are needed to access an area. An alternate route is necessary for escape from wildfire in case the main access is blocked. Roads should be wide enough to allow two-way traffic, should not be excessively steep, and should have road names and numbers clearly posted.

Management of fuels should be a yearly chore. Fuels are flammable vegetation, brush, grass, firewood, or other combustible materials. Clearing fuels from around the immediate vicinity of your home and out-buildings will greatly reduce the fire hazard to these structures. Tree branches should be at least 15 feet from chimneys and stovepipes. Firewood should be stacked and stored away from the house, with kindling kept in a separate place. Shake or wood-shingled roofs should be treated with fire retarding chemicals or replaced with non-flammable materials. The roof and

gutters should also be kept clear of leaves, needles, and branches. Keep an eye on your barbecue when cooking outdoors; more than one wildfire has been started by flying embers from the B.B.Q.

Keep firefighting tools such as rakes, hoes, axes, shovels, and a fire extinguisher handy to help control small fires around your home.

Knowing your local fire protection agency, planning and preparing fire escape routes, removing excess fuels from your property, and keeping some tools handy are probably the best wildfire insurance you can get. Talk to your neighbors about fire safety and increase your chances and theirs of escaping a fire disaster.

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