Your Personal Wildland Fire ACTION GUIDE



Ready



Set



Go!

NEW JERSEY FOREST FIRE SERVICE N J

READY, SET, GO!

Ready, Set, Go!



Saving Lives and Property through Advance Planning

This publication was prepared by the International Association of Fire Chiefs' RSG! Program and the USDA Forest Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Fire Administration.
New Jersey Forest Fire Service and Barnegat Fire Company..

To learn more about the Ready, Set, Go! Program and its partners, visit www.wildlandfireRSG.org.

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While spring and fall are the primary wildfire season, the fire season is now a year-round reality in many areas, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildland fire.

Each year, wildland fires consume hundreds of homes in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Studies show that as many as 80 percent of the homes lost to wildland fires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices. In addition, wildland fire related civilian deaths occur because people wait too long to leave their homes. Leaving late is a growing national problem, as well as a local concern in New Jersey.

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service and your local fire department take every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildland fire. However, the reality is that in a major wildland fire event, there will simply not be enough fire resources or firefighters to defend every home.

Successfully preparing for a wildland fire enables you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property. In this Ready, Set, Go! Action Guide, our goal is to provide the tips and tools you need to prepare for a wildland fire threat, have situational awareness when a fire starts, and to leave early when instructed to do so.

The Ready, Set, Go! Program works in complimentary and collaborative fashion with the Firewise® Communities Program and other existing wildland fire public education efforts. Utilizing firefighters, it amplifies their messages to individuals to better achieve the common goal of wildland fire preparedness.

Fire is, and always has been, a natural occurrence in the wildland. Historically, our forest burned periodically long before we built homes there. Wildland fire, fueled by a build-up of dry vegetation and driven by seasonal hot dry winds, are extremely dangerous and difficult to control. Many residents have built homes and landscaped without fully understanding the impact a fire can have on them and few have adequately prepared their families for a quick evacuation should a wildfire occur.

Its not a question of ***if***, but rather ***when***, the next major wildland fire will occur. Through advance planning, understanding, and preparation, we can all be partners in the wildland fire solution. The tips on the following pages are designed to create heightened awareness and a more fire-safe environment for you, your family, and firefighters.









"Fire preparedness education programs provide valuable guidance on property enhancements."

Living in the Wildland-Urban Interface and Ember Zone begins with a house that firefighters can defend.

Defensible Space Works

If you live next to a dense vegetation area, the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), you should provide firefighters with the defensible space they need to protect your home. Create a buffer zone by removing weeds, brush, and other vegetation. This helps keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risk from flying embers. Fire preparedness education programs provide valuable guidance on property enhancements.

Homes on the Wildland Boundary are at Risk, too

A home within one mile of a natural area is considered a part of an ember zone, where wind-driven embers can be a risk to your property. You and your home must be prepared well before a fire occurs. Ember fires can destroy homes or neighborhoods far from the actual front of the fire. Prepare your home with the tips from the following pages.

Consider This

Unmanaged vegetation between and around homes increases the risk of wildland fire spreading throughout the community, and endangering lives and property. Pre-fire planning, fuels management, and sufficient fuel breaks allow firefighters the space they need to keep fire from entering the community.



Create Defensible Space

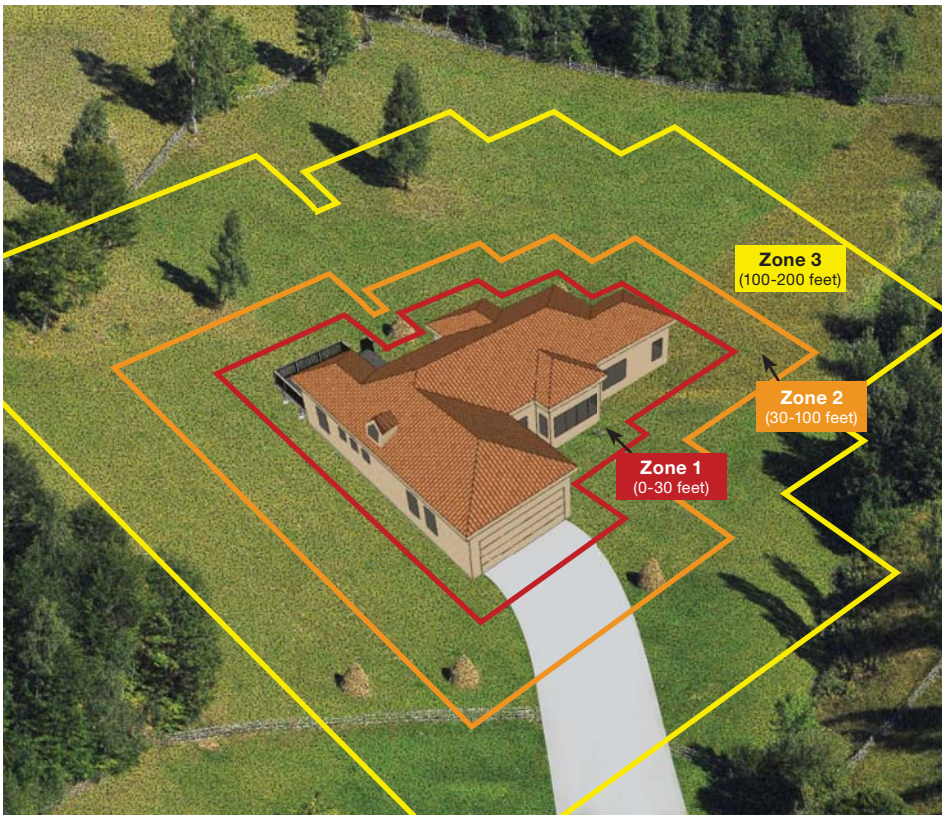
Defensible space is the space between a structure and the wildland area that creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of fire to a structure.

It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential to help protect a structure during a wildland fire.

You can create defensible space by removing weeds, brush, and other vegetation from around your property.

Defensible space is made up of three zones around your home; Zone 1: 0-30ft, Zone 2: 30-100ft, and Zone 3: 100-200ft.

During a major wildfire event, firefighting resources are spread thin and therefore these resources may not be available to protect every home. Follow the advice under each zone to help protect your home.



ZONE 1

0-30 feet around your home or to property line

- Use hard surfaces such as concrete or noncombustible rock mulch 0-5 feet around home.
- Use non-wood, low-growing herbaceous vegetation. Succulent plants and ground covers are good choices.
- Store firewood and other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your home, garage, or attached deck.
- Trim back touching or over-hanging branches from the roof to a distance of at least 10 feet.

ZONE 2

30-100 feet around your home or to property line

- Create vegetation groups, “islands,” to break up continuous fuels around your home.
- Remove ladder fuels to create a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing trees.
- Remove leaf and needle debris from the yard.
- Keep grass and wildflowers under 8 inches in height.

ZONE 3

100-200 feet around your home or to property line

- Create and maintain a minimum of 10 feet between the tops of trees.
- Remove ladder fuels, creating a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing up trees.
- Remove dead trees and shrubs.

Ladder Fuels

Ladder fuels allow the fire to climb from the surface fuels into the upper portion of the tree. They can be eliminated by increasing horizontal and vertical separation between vegetation.



Making Your Home Fire Resistant – Harden Your Home

Construction materials and the quality of the defensible space surrounding the structure are what increases the chance of survival in a wildland fire. Embers from a wildland fire will find the weak spot in your home's fire protection scheme and can easily catch because of small, overlooked, or seemingly inconsequential factors. However, there are measures you can take to safeguard your home from wildfire. While you may not be able to accomplish all the measures listed below, each will increase your home's, and possibly your family's, safety and survival during a wildland fire.


Residential Fire Sprinkler System


Gutter Guards or Screens


Enclosed Eaves


Screened Vents


Noncombustible Fencing


Windows Clear of Vegetation

Home Improvements

BALCONIES and DECKS

Embers can collect in or on combustible surfaces, or beneath decks and balconies, igniting the material and entering the home through walls or windows.

To harden your home even further, consider protecting your home with a residential fire sprinkler system. In addition to extinguishing a fire started by an ember that enters your home, a sprinkler system can help protect you and your family year-round from any home fire.

ROOFS

Roofs are the most vulnerable surface where embers land because they become lodged and can start a fire. Roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles, and rain gutters are all points of entry.

EAVES

Embers can gather under open eaves and ignite combustible material.

VENTS

Embers can enter the attic or other concealed spaces and ignite combustible materials. Vents in eaves and cornices are particularly vulnerable, as are any unscreened vents.

WALLS and FENCING

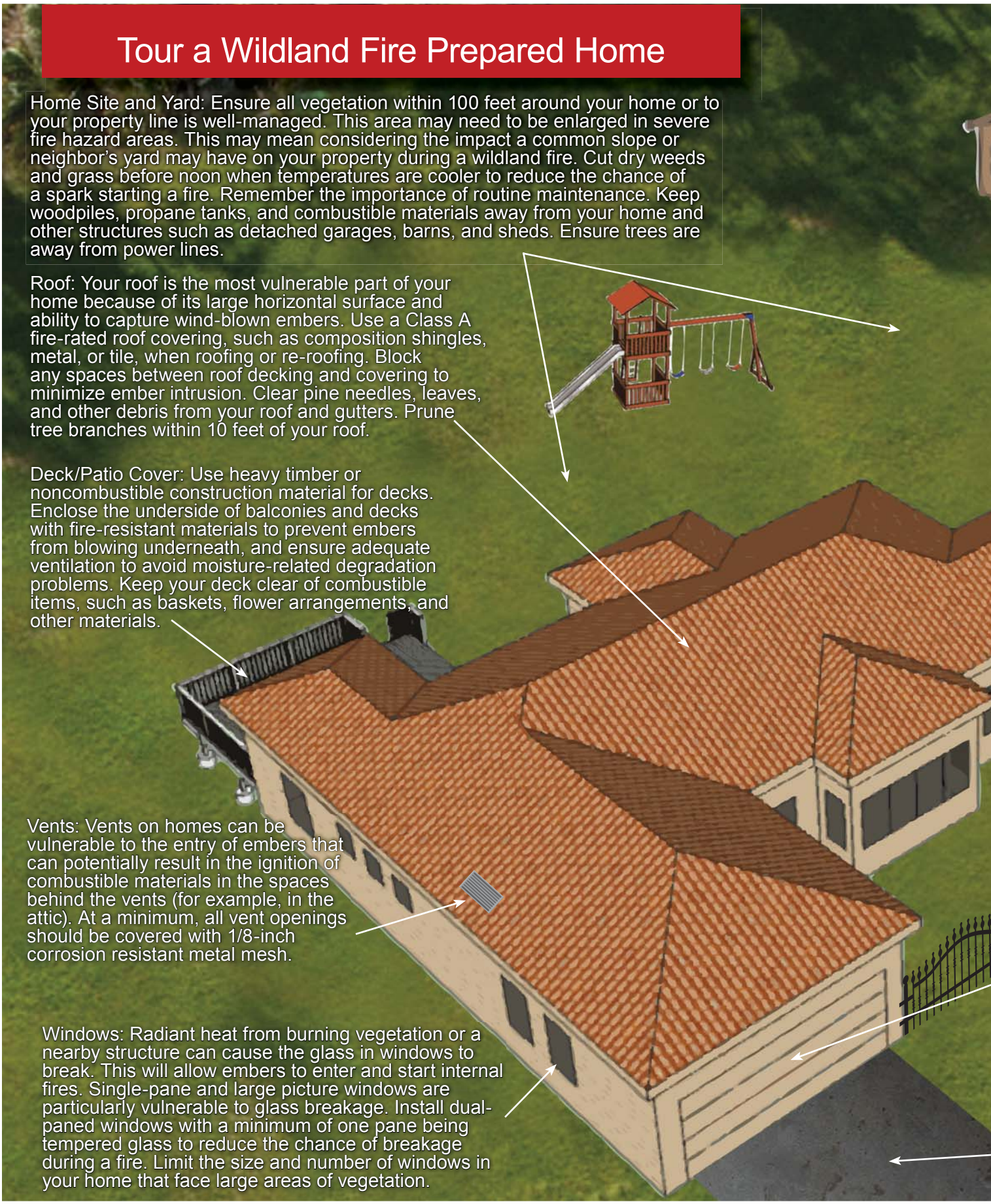
Combustible siding or other combustible/overlapping materials provide surfaces and crevices for embers to nestle and ignite. Combustible fencing can become engulfed, and if attached to the home's sidings can carry the fire right to the home.

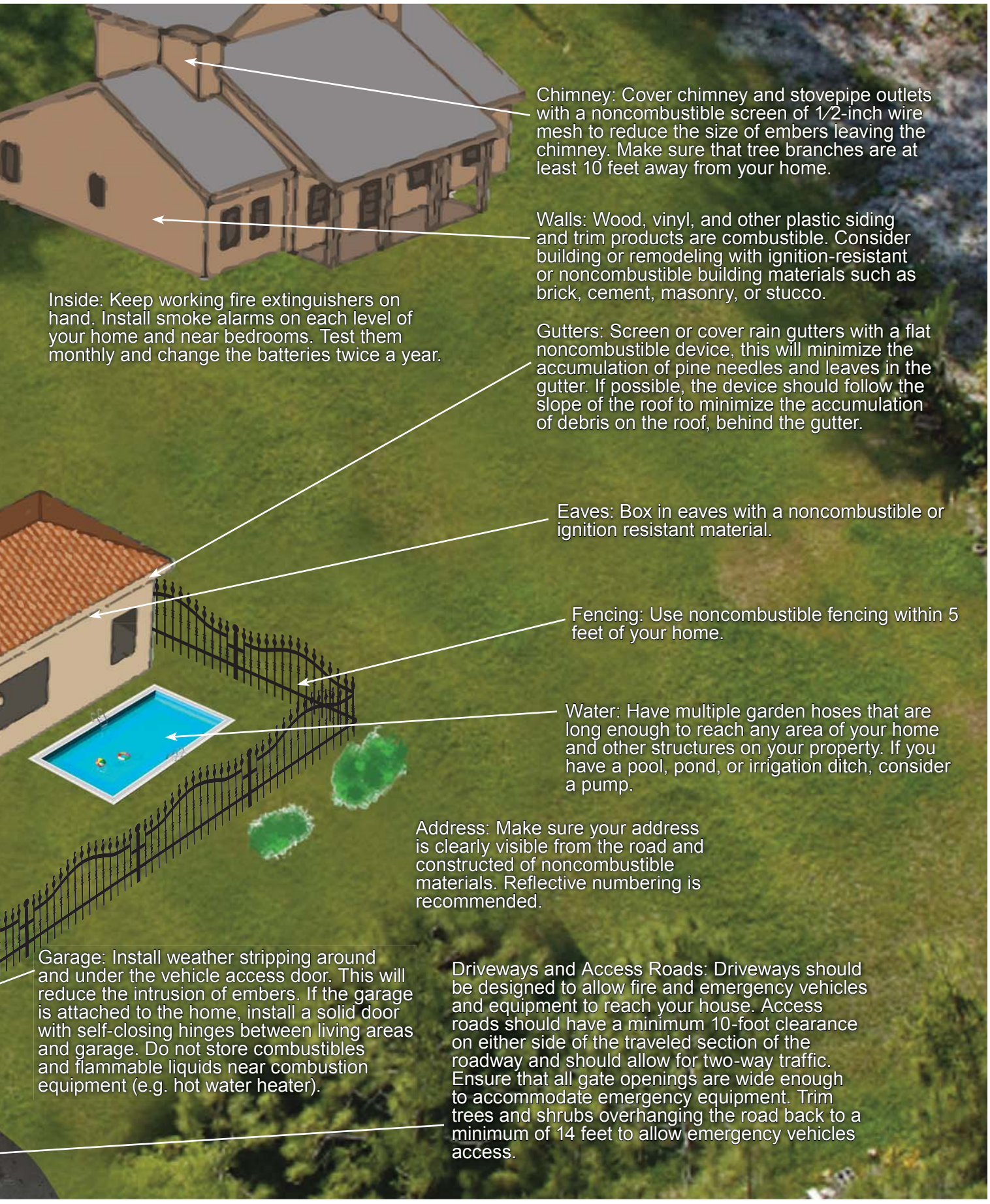
WINDOWS and DOORS

Embers can enter gaps in doors, including garage doors. Plants or combustible storage near windows can be ignited from embers and generate heat that can break windows and/or melt combustible frames.



Tour a Wildland Fire Prepared Home



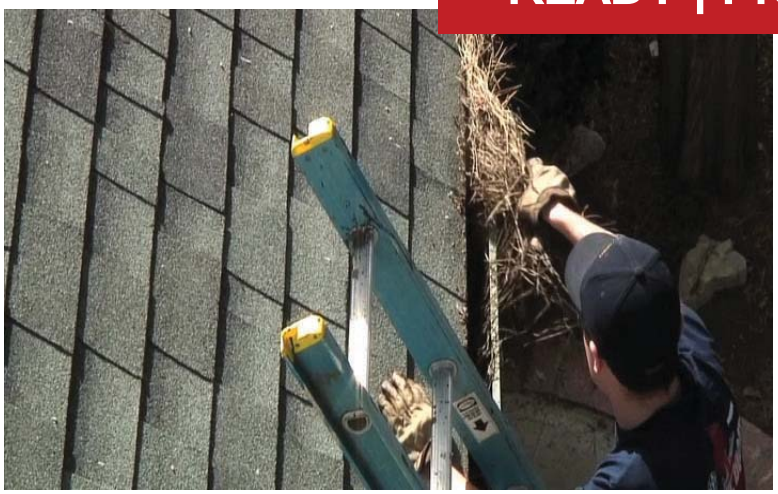

Chimney: Cover chimney and stovepipe outlets with a noncombustible screen of 1⁄2-inch wire mesh to reduce the size of embers leaving the chimney. Make sure that tree branches are at least 10 feet away from your home.
Walls: Wood, vinyl, and other plastic siding and trim products are combustible. Consider building or remodeling with ignition-resistant or noncombustible building materials such as brick, cement, masonry, or stucco.
Inside: Keep working fire extinguishers on hand. Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and near bedrooms. Test them monthly and change the batteries twice a year.
Gutters: Screen or cover rain gutters with a flat noncombustible device, this will minimize the accumulation of pine needles and leaves in the gutter. If possible, the device should follow the slope of the roof to minimize the accumulation of debris on the roof, behind the gutter.
Eaves: Box in eaves with a noncombustible or ignition resistant material.
Fencing: Use noncombustible fencing within 5 feet of your home.
Water: Have multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and other structures on your property. If you have a pool, pond, or irrigation ditch, consider a pump.
Address: Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road and constructed of noncombustible materials. Reflective numbering is recommended.
Garage: Install weather stripping around and under the vehicle access door. This will reduce the intrusion of embers. If the garage is attached to the home, install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and garage. Do not store combustibles and flammable liquids near combustion equipment (e.g. hot water heater).
Driveways and Access Roads: Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your house. Access roads should have a minimum 10-foot clearance on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic. Ensure that all gate openings are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment. Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road back to a minimum of 14 feet to allow emergency vehicles access.

Ready, Set, Go!

Now that you've done everything you can to protect your house, it's time to prepare your family. Your Wildfire Action Plan must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire.

Use these checklists to help you prepare your Wildfire Action Plan. Each family's plan will be different, depending on their situation. Rehearse your plan with your entire family regularly.

READY | Preparing for the Fire Threat







Create a Family Disaster Plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans and rehearse it regularly. Include the evacuation of large animals, such as horses, in your plan.

- ☐ Have fire extinguishers on hand and teach your family how to use them.
- ☐ Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are and how to use them.
- ☐ Plan and practice several different evacuation routes.
- ☐ Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire hazard area.
- ☐ Assemble an emergency supply kit as recommended by the American Red Cross. Keep an extra kit in your vehicle.
- ☐ Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members.
- ☐ Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers in your emergency supply kit.
- ☐ Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire and weather emergency announcements.

HIKING AND CAMPING

- ☐ Take long pants and a long sleeve shirt made of natural fibers (e.g., cotton).
- ☐ Have good, updated maps and pre-plan potential escape routes.

SET | Situational Awareness When a Fire Starts

- [ ] Monitor fire weather conditions and fire status. See www.inciweb.nwcg.gov. Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates.
- [ ] Evacuate as soon as you are 'set!'
- [ ] Alert family and neighbors.
- [ ] Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e., clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- [ ] Ensure that you have your emergency supply kit on hand that includes all necessary items, such as a battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and a lot of drinking water.
- [ ] Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water, and ensure your family and pets are accounted for until you are ready to leave.

HIKING AND CAMPING

- [ ] Maintain awareness when hiking or camping during the spring and fall, the typical wildfire seasons in this state.

INSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- [ ] Close all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- [ ] Remove all shades and curtains from windows. Move furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- [ ] Turn off pilot lights and air conditioning.
- [ ] Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.



OUTSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- [ ] Bring combustible items from the exterior of the house inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc.) If you have a pool, place combustible items in the water.
- [ ] Turn off propane tanks and other gas at the meter.
- [ ] Don't leave sprinklers on or water running. They can effect critical water pressure.
- [ ] Leave exterior lights on.
- [ ] Back your car into the driveway to facilitate a quick departure. Shut doors and roll up windows.
- [ ] Have a ladder available.
- [ ] Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires until you leave.
- [ ] Cover attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals if time permits.

SURVIVAL TIPS: IF YOU ARE TRAPPED

- [ ] Stay in your home until the fire passes. Shelter away from outside walls.
- [ ] Bring garden hoses inside house so embers and flames do not destroy them.
- [ ] Look for spot fires and extinguish if found inside the house. Remember to check the attic.
- [ ] Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers, such as cotton. It is also important for campers and hikers to have this clothing in case they become trapped while out.
- [ ] Stay hydrated.
- [ ] Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside).
- [ ] Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply. Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- [ ] After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks, or embers. Check the attic as well.
- [ ] If there are fires that you cannot extinguish, call 9-1-1.

GO! | Leave Early

By leaving early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job in a safer environment.

WHEN TO LEAVE

Do not wait to be advised to leave if there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route. Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. If you are advised to leave by local authorities, do not hesitate!

WHERE TO GO

Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

HOW TO GET THERE

Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles. Choose the safest route away from the fire.

WHAT TO TAKE

Take your emergency supply kit containing your family and pet's necessary items.



EMERGENCY SUPPLIES LIST

The American Red Cross recommends every family have an emergency supply kit assembled long before a wildland fire or other emergency occurs. Use the checklist below to help assemble yours. For more information on emergency supplies visit www.redcross.org/get-help.

- ☐ **Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day) and non-perishable food for family (3 day supply).**
- ☐ **First aid kit and sanitation supplies.**
- ☐ **Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.**
- ☐ **An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash, or traveler's checks.**
- ☐ **Extra eyeglasses, contact lenses, prescriptions, and medications.**
- ☐ **Important family documents and contact numbers, including insurance documents.**
- ☐ **Map marked with evacuation routes.**
- ☐ **Easily carried valuables and irreplaceable items.**
- ☐ **Personal electronic devices and chargers.**
- ☐ **Note: Keep a pair of old shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.**

HIKING AND CAMPING

- ☐ Use your planned escape routes to leave the area.
- ☐ Try to avoid cutting across hillsides, particularly at mid-slope.
- ☐ If the fire is very close, drop your equipment and run to safety.



My Personal WildlandFire ACTION PLAN

Write up your Wildland Fire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

During high-fire-danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry, and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildland fire.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Out-of-Area Contact _____ Phone: _____

Work _____ _____ _____

School _____ _____ _____

Other _____ _____ _____

EVACUATION ROUTES

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

WHERE TO GO

_____

_____

_____

_____

LOCATION OF EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT(S)

_____

NOTES

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Check the New Jersey Forest Fire Service website at njwildfire.org for current Fire Danger ratings

READY, SET, GO!

My Personal WildlandFire ACTION PLAN

Residential Safety Checklist

Tips To Improve Family and Property Survival During A Wildland Fire

Ready

Get ready

- ☑ Dispose of or relocate combustible material from around your home.
- ☑ Trim trees & bushes allowing ample space between your home and landscape vegetation.

Set

Be prepared

- ☑ Arrange your 'Go-Kit' with prescription medication, emergency supplies, important documents, and other essential items.
- ☑ Create your own action plan; involve your family and practice exit plans from the home and neighborhood frequently.
- ☑ Be sure you're familiar with local emergency notification systems and evacuation systems.

Go!

Act early

- ☑ Get your 'Go-Kit' and leave well before the threat approaches following a planned accessible route.
- ☑ Stay aware of the situation and follow your plan.
- ☑ Cooperate with local authorities during evacuation and re-entry processes.

Ready, Set, Go!

www.wildlandfireRSG.org

FEMA

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