

Wildfire Safety

The Bonita Springs Fire Control & Rescue District would like to take this opportunity to share with you important ways that you can safeguard your home against wildfires. Southwest Florida can have wildfires year-round but generally, wildfire season peaks from January through June.



Tips to make your home or business safer from the threat of Wildfires:

- ◆ Use **Firewise Construction**. When possible use fire-resistant materials for your home. Vulnerable areas include the roof, soffits and windows. Asphalt/fiberglass shingles, sheet metal, terra cotta tile and concrete are recommended roofing materials. Metal screening or hardware cloth under vinyl soffits is recommended and should be made of noncombustible material. Windows and skylights are entry points for wildfire. Radiant heat can break large windows making single-panes, particularly susceptible. Smaller double paned or tempered glass is more fire resistant.
- ◆ Practice **Firewise Landscaping**. Structures should have an area at least 30 feet around them that is clean and free of dead vegetation thus creating a **Safety Zone**. If your structure borders heavy wildland fuels, try to maintain an area 100-200 feet free of debris. This area does not need to be devoid of shrubs and trees, but should be wisely landscaped with plants known to be less-flammable, separated by walkways and grassed areas to isolate vegetation that might bring fire from nearby wildland into your home.

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Within the Safety Zone, follow these guidelines:

- ◆ Thin trees so that the crowns (tree tops) are 10 to 15 feet apart
- ◆ Remove any “ladder fuels” or vines and shrubs that can carry a ground fire up to the treetops
- ◆ Remove dense fuels, overhanging branches, and carefully plan your landscaping within 30 feet of the structure
- ◆ Prune tree limbs so that the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground
- ◆ Instead of flammable mulch like bark or wood chips, use lava stone or coarse gravel around any shrubbery that is within 5 feet of the structure.
- ◆ Remove highly flammable plants. These are characterized by resinous sap and waxy leaves. Included but not limited to: melaleuca, bald cypress, saw palmetto, wax myrtle, yaupon, red cedar, cypress and young pine trees
- ◆ Less flammable plant options include: citrus, oak, magnolia, queen palms, philodendron, anise, and aloe to name a few!
- ◆ Locate firewood and propane gas tanks at least 50 feet away from the structure
- ◆ Keep 100 feet of hose readily available at a faucet away from the structure

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What if a Wildfire threatens my community?



- ◆ **HAVE a PLAN!** Create an evacuation plan and make sure all family members know and understand it. While at work, have a plan for children and pets that are home. Secure a neighbor who is willing to help if they are home during the day.
- ◆ Know two evacuation routes out of the neighborhood. Children who are home alone should be prepared to evacuate and have a predetermined place to meet their family. Children should understand that firefighters and emergency personnel will go door-to-door to evacuate neighborhoods.
- ◆ Always follow the directions of emergency personnel and evacuate immediately if necessary. Remember officials will not allow you to enter your neighborhood if the fire is imminent or road conditions are hazardous due to heavy smoke.
- ◆ **Create a Go-Kit**, the supplies are similar to what you would prep for a hurricane. Supplies should include food/water, clothing, and important documents and other items, such as medications, that you may need.
- ◆ Maintain a functioning irrigation system around the structure.
- ◆ Only if time permits, remove curtains that might ignite from the radiant heat of wildfires. Move flammable furniture away from the windows and glass doors and disconnect the power and fuel supplies.
- ◆ **Have a PLAN!** Yes, this is repeated because it is that important.