

Home Ignition Zone **SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Preparing your home for wildfire

When it comes to protecting your home from wildfire, the most important firefighter is you!



Home Ignition Zone

Dear Wisconsin Homeowner,

Wildfires are common in Wisconsin. A look at fire occurrence over the past ten years shows that nearly two-thirds of the wildfires in our state began on private property. Often, when a fire starts on private property, homes and other buildings are threatened and sometimes destroyed or damaged by the wildfire. Research has shown that the characteristics of buildings and their immediate surroundings determine the risk of ignition during a wildfire.

This home ignition zone self-assessment was created to help you determine which characteristics of your home and landscaping could be improved to make your property less vulnerable to wildfire.

Where do I begin?

If you answer “no” to any of the self-assessment items, there is still work you can do to better prepare your home for wildfire. Remember, a fire needs fuel to burn. By reducing or changing the fuels around your home, for example pruning trees, cleaning out gutters and raking leaves, you are removing fuel a wildfire needs to burn.

Start right away

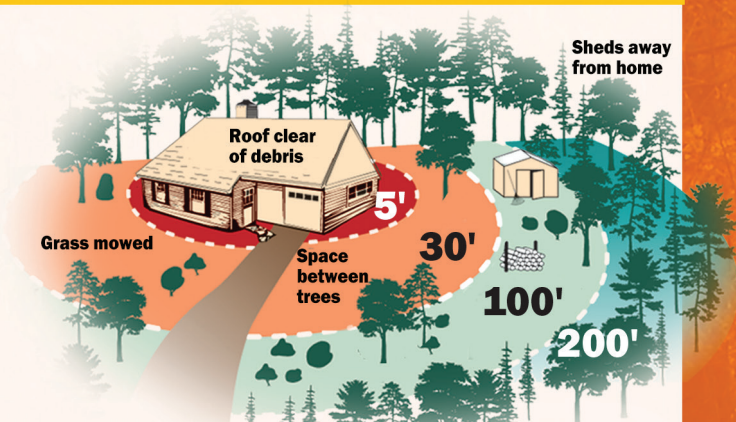
Studies of past fires have shown that the little things can make a big difference when it comes to your home surviving a wildfire. Maintenance suggestions can be implemented quickly and for little or no cost. You can tackle bigger projects as time and resources allow. Every step you take, no matter how small, will make your home safer.

For more information

If you have questions about this self-assessment or if you'd like more information on what you can do to better prepare your home for wildfire, contact your local DNR office or learn more at:

dnr.wi.gov, keyword “fire”

Self-Assessment



THE HOME IGNITION ZONE

is your home and its surroundings out to 100-200 feet. You can make your home more likely to survive a wildfire by reducing the amount of fuel in this area.



A well-prepared home has...

- Fire-resistant construction
- Lean, clean and green landscaping
- Regular maintenance
- Safe distance to flammables

Preparing your home for wildfire

Fire-Resistant

Roof is made of fire-resistant materials

- Yes Not sure
 No

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home and at the most risk of being exposed to flying embers. For this reason, it is very important that roofing materials be fire-resistant. Use Class-A asphalt shingles, metal, or other fire-resistant roofing material.



Exterior walls are fire-resistant

- Yes Not sure
 No

Ideally, exterior walls on buildings in fire-prone areas should be made of materials such as brick, stucco, fiber cement or logs. These products are much better able to resist heat than vinyl which can soften and melt. If updating your siding is not an option, you should take extra care to keep vegetation, dry needles and leaves, firewood, and other flammable materials away from your home.



Construction



Eaves and vents are covered

- Yes Not sure
 No

Eaves and vents are possible points of entry into your home for flying embers that may be blowing around during a wildfire. Vents should be screened with a non-combustible wire mesh with openings not more than 1/8 inch in size. Eaves should be boxed in with 5/8 inch plywood or a fire-resistant material.



Attachments are made of fire-resistant or non-combustible materials

- Yes Not applicable
 No

Decks, porches, and balconies are hazardous by design because they are generally made of flammable materials and are usually flat, which provides the ideal location for flying embers to land, smolder, and ignite other materials they come in contact with. Use heavy timber or noncombustible construction materials.



Lean, Clean and

Vegetation is away from windows

- Yes
- No

Windows can break when exposed to heat which can allow embers to enter your home. Keep the area around windows clear of flammable vegetation such as evergreen shrubs and trees as well as tall plants.

There are very few, if any, plants within 3-5 feet of the home

- Yes
- No

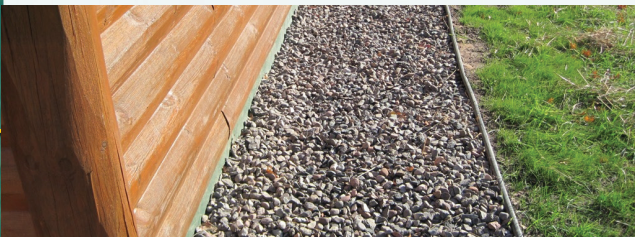
While plants are not recommended in this area, if you do choose to have some here, low-growing plants and deciduous shrubs are preferable to evergreens. Plants should be well-spaced, well-maintained and interspersed with non-combustible materials.



No mulch or non-combustible mulch within 3-5 feet of the home

- Yes
- No

Wood mulch can ignite during a wildfire and should not be next to flammable siding. Ideally, the area 3-5 feet around a home should be bare dirt, mowed grass or non-combustible materials such as brick or decorative stone.



Green Landscaping



Limited evergreens within 30 feet of the home

Yes

No

Evergreens are highly flammable and are not recommended within 30 feet of buildings. If you choose to have some in this area, keep them separated from one another and prune their lower branches up and away from the ground.

Vegetation is thinned in the zone 30 to 100 feet from the home

Yes

No

The area that extends out 30-100 feet around the home can be very important in slowing an advancing wildfire, but only if the vegetation is managed correctly. Create space between branches of evergreen trees. Encourage a mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. Create 'fuel breaks' by incorporating mowed grass, garden islands and non-flammable features.



DECIDUOUS trees and shrubs drop their leaves in the fall

EVERGREENS have green needles throughout the year

Preparing your home for wildfire

Regular

Fallen debris is cleared off the roof, out of gutters and window wells, underneath decks and away from foundations

Yes

No

Roofs, rain gutters, decks and balconies are common places where fallen leaves, needles and other flammable debris accumulate. They are also likely places for flying embers to land during a wildfire. Routinely remove debris from these places. Consider installing “gutter guards” over rain gutters and fire-resistant screening under decks to simplify future maintenance.



Tree limbs are trimmed back at least 10 feet from roof

Yes

No

Overhanging branches can drop leaves/needles directly onto a roof or in rain gutters, creating a maintenance problem. Branches overhanging a roof can cause a building to ignite should that tree catch fire.

Branches on evergreens are pruned up and away from the ground

Yes

No

Not applicable

Keeping lower branches of evergreens away from the ground may prevent a surface fire from igniting lower limbs. Once an evergreen begins to burn, the whole tree can quickly become engulfed by flames. Routinely rake away any debris that collects underneath branches.

Maintenance



Lawn is kept mowed, green and free of leaf litter and needles

Yes

No

Lawns that are allowed to dry out during times of drought as well as lawns that are covered with fallen leaves, needles and branches provide a wildfire with the 'fuel' it needs to continue burning. Keep lawns raked free of fallen debris, especially in spring and when weather conditions make wildfires more probable. Grass around buildings should be mowed short and watered in times of drought.



Yard is free of dead trees and shrubs

Yes

No

Dead vegetation, which can get very dry, is more likely to ignite by flames or flying embers than live vegetation. Keep trees and shrubs free of dead wood and remove any dead and dying trees and shrubs around buildings.



Preparing your home for wildfire

Safe Distance

Outbuildings located within 30 feet of the home are clear of flammables

Yes

No

Not applicable

If buildings are within 30 feet of one another, the ignition of one could result in the ignition of the other. Because of this, it is important to make sure each building has lean, clean and green landscaping and regular maintenance.

Firewood and other flammable materials are at least 30 feet from buildings

Yes

No

Not applicable

Firewood stacks, wood scraps, brush piles and stored vehicles are at risk of ignition from flying embers and surface fire. If these combustibles are near buildings, it increases the likelihood of the building igniting as well. Store firewood and other flammables at least 30 feet from buildings. Go one step further and create a cleared area around them.



Powerlines are free of overhanging branches and nearby dead and dying trees

Yes

No

Not applicable

Trees that are close to powerlines are potential ignition sources, should the tree or branches fall on the lines. Contact your public utility to remove branches and dead and dying trees around power lines.

to Flammables



Propane tanks or fuel oil tanks are free of combustibile materials in the surrounding area

Yes

No

Not applicable

Clear the area 10 feet around propane tanks. Keep surrounding grass short and green. To reduce maintenance, fill in the area with non-combustible materials such as decorative stone or gravel.



Nearby neighbors have 30 feet of defensible space around their homes

Yes

No

Not applicable

If there are other homes within 100 feet of your home, the quality of their defensible space can have an effect on your property if a wildfire burns through the area. Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety and work together to lower your overall risk.



Preparing your home for wildfire



Surviving wildfire by adapting to it

Taking steps to live, work and recreate responsibly in places at risk to wildfire is necessary to protect lives, property and the beauty of our natural surroundings. We can adapt to living in Wisconsin's fire prone areas by preventing, preparing and planning for wildfires.



Preventing wildfires - understanding why and when wildfires occur and taking proactive measures to prevent human-caused wildfire disasters



Preparing for wildfires - before a wildfire occurs, learning what actions can be taken by homeowners, to help homes survive



Planning for wildfires - working together to develop a plan and take actions on the community level to reduce the impacts of a destructive wildfire

dnr.wi.gov, keyword "fire"

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