

Save Your Home from Wildfire

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Fires can do permanent and long-lasting damage to your woodlands and property. In the past decade an average of 1,490 fires in Kentucky burnt 38,979 acres every year. Fires damage your woodland's current or future timber value, but small woodland owners must be primarily concerned with their homes and other structures. With so many fires in our communities, small family forest owners must take steps to protect and prepare their homes for potential wildfires.

This factsheet focuses on creating defensible space around your home to slow or halt an advancing wildfire. (If you're interested in ways in constructing a Firewise home, such as safer building materials and construction methods, you can review the references on the back of this factsheet.)



Nonflammable metal roofs aid in creating a Firewise home.

Defensible space is an area around your house or other structure where forest fuels are treated, cleared, or reduced to limit wildfire's potential to impact your house. Create a minimum of 30 feet of defensible space around your entire home. The steeper the terrain your home sits on, the greater your defensible space will need to be because fire travels faster and greater distances on steeper slopes. On very steep slopes, such as 40 degrees, you might need 100 feet of defensible space.

In the defensible space around your home or other structures you must be extremely vigilant in

removing any highly flammable materials. Dead branches, firewood stacks, gasoline storage, and propane tanks should be removed. Leaf litter and debris should be removed from gutters and off roofs. Plants should be pruned back, including any large trees near the house, so that no branches are within 10 feet of the house. Any tree that overhangs any part of your home (roof, porch, deck, and chimney) should be trimmed back to prevent fire from transferring from the ground to the tree canopy and your house.



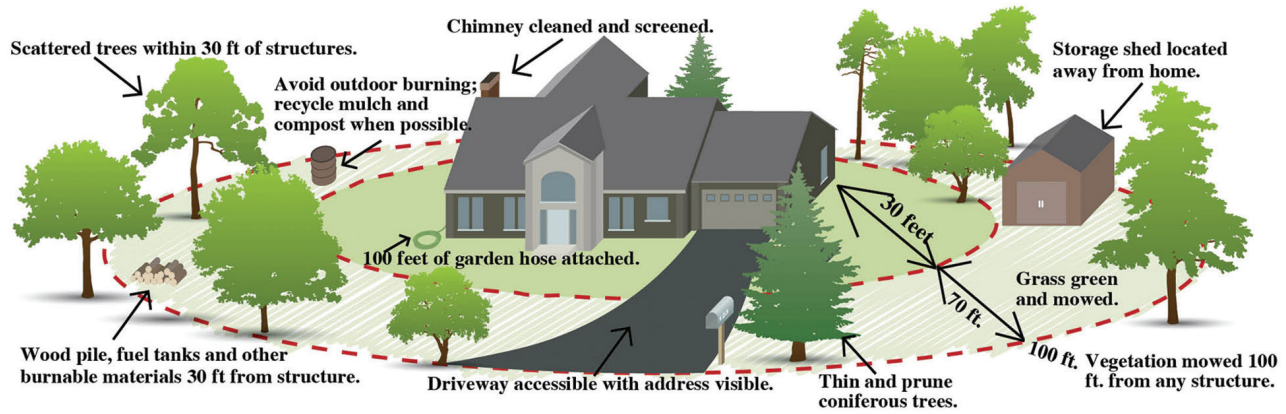
Prune trees from the ground to 10 feet up and trim any overhanging branches to prevent fire from transferring to your roof.

The types of plants in the defensible space are important. There's no such thing as a fireproof plant, but certain plants should not be planted near the home because they can be highly flammable. Plants with high resin, oils, and waxes burn easily and can transfer fire to your house and should be removed. These include eastern red cedar, any pine, and holly. If you are landscaping or replacing plants, consider planting fewer flammable trees and more shrubs native or adapted to Kentucky. Trees and shrubs that work well include elms, oaks, sycamore, birch, dogwood, redbud, hazelnut, viburnum, sumac, and spicebush.

Consider taking several precautions to ensure that your family is safe and your home and property are accessible for firefighters. Your driveway should be a minimum of 12 feet wide and should have at least 15 feet of vertical clear-



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This diagram depicts a Firewise home. Being prepared for a wildfire is especially important if your home is near a woodland.

ance. The driveway should be in overall good shape and able to support a fire truck. Your address should be visible from the road; large reflective tape numbers can be used on your mailbox or post.



Build defensible space before your home is in danger. Be proactive so you are prepared when wildfires threaten your home.

Kentucky has two fire hazard seasons: from February 15 through April 30 (spring) and October 1 through December 15 (fall). During these times new leaf litter has been added to the forest floor, and weather conditions are ideal for wildfires to start. It is illegal to burn during these dates between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. in or within 150 feet of any woodland or bushland. This restriction includes trash burning! Every year about a quarter of the fires in Kentucky are started from out of control debris burning. Before each fire hazard season, inspect your defensible space. Mow the grass in the area, and remove all the leaf litter. Inspect your gutters and review your trees to ensure that they are still

properly pruned.

Every year leaves fall, branches fall, and trees die and create new fuel for Kentucky's wildfires. The best time to start protecting your home from potential wildfires is now!

If you are interested in getting your home Firewise, find assistance by contacting your regional office of the Kentucky Division of Forestry or your local fire department. Someone can review your current home's preparedness for wildfire and make recommendations to help you get ready for fire season.

For More Information

KDF Firewise: <http://tinyURL.com/KDFFire>
www.firewise.org

References

- Creating Defensible Space –**
 Kentucky Firewise Handout.
 Kentucky Division of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service.
- Is Your Home Firewise? –**
 Kentucky Firewise Handout.
 Kentucky Division of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service.
- The Homeowner's Role in Firewise –**
 Kentucky Firewise Handout.
 Kentucky Division of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service.