

Wildfire - Wildland/Urban Interface

Many of you have read articles concerning the wildland fires in the western part of the United States and how typical these are of the examples of the increasing fire threat which results from the wildland/urban interface problem. For those of you that are not familiar with the definition of Wildland/Urban Interface, it can be defined as that area where structures and/or other human development meet or intertwine with undeveloped wildland or other forms of vegetative fuels.

It should be noted that wildland/urban interface fire losses are not just experienced in the western states. Almost every state, to some degree, has experienced wildland/urban interface fire losses. According to the National Fire Protection Association, an estimated 9,000 homes or other forms of structures have been totally lost due the wildland/urban interface fires in the United States.

As the result of the increasing concern regarding wildland/urban interface fires, we would like to provide recommended steps that individuals can take to reduce the risk of fire losses. The steps presented will help create a "Safety Zone" around your home or business by doing the following:

- *Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill of your home/business.
- *Remove all combustible materials within 30 to 50 feet of your home/business.
- *Maintain a healthy lawn and mow the grass around your home on a regular basis.
- *Remove dead trees, leaves, limbs, or other vegetation around your home/business.
- *Thin a 15 foot space between tree crowns and remove limbs within 15 feet of the ground.
- *Remove vines that are growing on the exterior walls of your home/business.
- *Prune tree branches and shrubs within 15 feet of any stovepipe or chimney and check to make sure your spark arrestor is in good condition on the flue.
- *If any tree limbs are close to power lines, ask the power company to remove them.

Avoid the use of combustible material on the exterior of your buildings. The risk of fire loss can be reduced by using approved building materials known to be fire retardant. For example, using clay tile or other approved noncombustible material on your roof can reduce the threat of fire from floating cinders from igniting the structure. Also, fire retardant siding material can be installed to help keep fires from quickly spreading to the structure.

The above information is just a few of the helpful tips that can be used to help mitigate the potential spread of fire. Information was provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. For additional information on wildland fires, contact FEMA on the Internet. Their address is: <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/search/>.