

# READY, SET, GO!

YOUR PERSONAL WILDLAND FIRE ACTION GUIDE



## OKLAHOMA



# READY, SET, GO!

## Oklahoma Wildfire Action Plan

Saving Lives and Property  
through Advance Planning



Oklahoma typically is at risk from wildland fires nine months of the year, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Prolonged drought conditions in recent years have made this a year-round threat in many areas, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfires at any time.

Each year more than 1,000 wildfires damage or destroy Oklahoma homes located in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), despite the best efforts of firefighters. Studies have shown that many homes that survive a wildfire do so because of proactive steps taken by the homeowner.

Your fire department takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildfire. However, the reality is that in a major wildfire, there will simply not be enough fire engines or firefighters to defend every home.

Successfully preparing for a wildfire requires you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property. In this publication, we will give you the guidance and tools you need to prepare.

Fire is a natural occurrence in the wildland. Our grasslands and forests have burned periodically long before we built homes in these areas. Wildfires fueled by a build-up of dry vegetation and driven by seasonal hot, dry winds are extremely dangerous and difficult control. If you choose to live in a wildland area, understand that the building materials and construction and landscaping choices you make can determine how well your home may perform in a wildfire. It is equally important to understand the benefits of having an emergency plan for your household and being prepared for a quick evacuation. Most wildfire-related deaths occur because people wait too late to leave their home.

It's not a question of if, but when, the next major wildfire will occur. That's why the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but you. Through advance planning and preparation, you can be ready for wildfire. We hope you find the guidance and tools in the next pages helpful in creating increased awareness and a more fire-safe environment for you and your family.



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# Living in the Wildland Urban Interface and the Ember Zone

Ready, Set, Go! begins with a house that firefighters can defend.

## Defensible space works!

If you live next to a natural area, the Wildland Urban Interface, you must create "defensible space" around your home. This buffer zone is created by removing weeds, brush and managing other vegetation, reducing the wildfire threat to your home and reduce the threat from flying embers. It will also provide a space for fire fighters to safely defend your home.



A home within one mile or more of a natural area is in the Ember Zone. Wind-driven embers can threaten your home. You and your home must be prepared well before a wildfire occurs. Ember-started fires can destroy homes and neighborhoods far from the actual flame front of the wildfire.





# What is 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 wildfire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting from a direct flame or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential for a structure's survivability during a wildfire.

## Zone One

Zone One : 0-5 feet

- Use non-woody, herbacious vegetation.
- Use hard surfaces such as concrete or noncombustible mulch.
- Remove leaf litter (dry leaves and pine needles) from roof and rain gutters.
- Remove combustible material from under the deck.

## Zone Two

Zone Two: 5-30 feet (or to the property line)

- Remove leaf litter (dry leaves/pine needles) from yard.
- Relocate woodpiles or other combustible materials into Zone Three.
- Create "islands" of vegetation groupings.
- Remove "ladder fuels" (low-level vegetation that allows the fire to spread from the ground to the tree canopy). Create a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches. This can be done by reducing the height of low-level vegetation and/or trimming low tree branches.

## Zone Three

Zone Three: 30 - 100 feet (or to the property line)

You can minimize the chance of fire jumping from plant to plant by removing dead material and removing and/or thinning vegetation. The minimum spacing between vegetation is three times the dimension of the plant.

- Remove "ladder fuels."
- Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.

# What is a Hardened Home?

Construction materials, building design and the quality of the defensible space surrounding it are what gives a home the best chance to survive a wildland fire. Embers from a wildland fire can find the weak link in your home's fire protection scheme and gain the upper hand because of a small, overlooked or seemingly inconsequential factor. However, there are measures you can take to safeguard your home from wildland fire. While you may not be able to accomplish all the measures listed below, each can improve the ability of your home to survive during a wildfire.

To harden your home even further, consider protecting your with a residential fire sprinkler system. In addition to extinguishing a fire started by embers or flames that enter your home, it also protects you and your family year-around from any fire than may start in your home.



## ROOFS

The roof is most vulnerable part of your home because it provides a large horizontal surface area where embers can land and ignite combustible materials. Roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles, rain gutters and locations where the roof intersects with a wall are all vulnerable.

## EAVES

Embers can be driven to the open eave area and enter the attic through vents and other small gaps that can exist between materials.

## VENTS

Embers can enter the attic and other enclosed spaces and ignite combustible materials. Vents that provide a vertical surface to wind-driven embers for example eave vents in open-eave construction are particularly vulnerable. If unscreened, these vents are even more vulnerable to embers.

## WALLS

Combustible siding and trim will be vulnerable to flames from ignited vegetation or debris at the base of the wall. This fire can then spread vertically to the windows and eave area.

## WINDOWS and DOORS

Embers can enter through open windows and through gaps at the edge of garage doors. Plants or combustibles stored under windows can be ignited by embers. The resulting flames can break window glass and ignite combustible frames.

## BALCONIES and DECKS

Embers can collect or under balconies and decks, igniting vegetative debris and other combustible materials, including the deck. The flames can then enter the home through walls or broken glass in the window or sliding glass door. Decks overhanging a steep slope can be vulnerable to flames from a fire burning upslope.





# Tour a Wildfire Ready Home

**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.

**Deck/Patio Cover:** Keep your under-deck area clear of combustible materials and debris. If available in your area, install decking that is approved for use in wildfire prone areas. If the underside of the deck is enclosed be sure to provide adequate ventilation to avoid moisture-related degradation problems.

**Address:** Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road.


**Roof:** Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because of its large horizontal surface and ability to capture wind-blown embers. Homes with untreated wood-shake roofs are at high risk of being destroyed during a wildfire. When roofing or re-roofing use a Class A fire-rated roof covering such as composition, metal or tile. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to minimize ember intrusion. Clear pine needles, leaves and other debris from your roof and gutters. Prune tree branches within 10 feet of your roof.

**Vents:** Vents on homes can be vulnerable to the entry of embers and that can potentially result in the ignition of combustible materials in the spaces behind the vents (for example, in the attic). All vent openings should be covered with 1/8-inch or smaller corrosion resistant metal mesh.

**Windows:** Radiant heat from burning vegetation or a nearby structure can cause the glass in windows to break. This will allow embers to enter and start internal fires. Single-pane and large picture windows are particularly vulnerable to glass breakage. Install dual-paned windows with a minimum of one pane being tempered glass to reduce the chance of breakage during a fire. Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation.

**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 gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment. Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road to a minimum of 13 1/2 feet to allow emergency vehicles to pass.





**Chimney:** Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with a noncombustible screen of 1/2-inch wire mesh to reduce the size and energy of embers leaving the chimney, this will reduce the chance of escaping embers starting a fire. Make sure that your tree branches are at least 10 feet away from the chimney.

**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. Be sure to extend materials from the foundation to the roof.

**Fencing:** Use noncombustible fencing within 5 feet of your home and where the last 5 foot section connects to your home.

**Eaves:** Box in eaves with a noncombustible or ignition resistant material.

**Gutters:** Screen or cover rain gutters with a flat noncombustible device, when installed the device should follow the slope of the roof. This will minimize the accumulation of pine needles and leaves in the gutter.

**Home Site and Yard:** Ensure you have at least a 100-foot of defensible space (managed vegetation) around your home. Note that your defensible space zone may need to be enlarged in severe hazard areas. This may mean looking past what you own to determine the impact a common slope or neighbors' yard will have on your property during a wildfire. Cut dry weeds and grass before noon when temperatures are cooler to reduce the chance of a spark starting a fire. Landscape with fire-resistant plants that have a high moisture content and are low-growing. Remember the importance of routing maintenance. Keep woodpiles, propane tanks and combustible materials away from your home and other structures such as detached garages, barns and sheds. Ensure that trees are far away from power lines.

**Garage:** Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket and hoe available for fire emergencies. Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and the garage. Install weather stripping around and under the vehicle access door to reduce the intrusion of embers. Store all combustibles and flammable liquids away from ignition sources intrusion of embers.

# READY, SET, GO!

## OKLAHOMA

### Create Your Own Wildfire Action Plan

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.

Once you finish your plan, rehearse it regularly with your family and keep it in a safe and accessible place for quick implementation.

## GET READY



### Prepare Your Family

- Create a Family Disaster Plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans and rehearse it regularly.
- Have fire extinguishers on hand and train 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 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.
- Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members who have relocated.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted near your phone and in your emergency supply kit.

### Prepare Your Property

- Establish and maintain firebreaks around pastures and structures.
- Create defensible space around all structures.
- Reinforce fences with metal posts if applicable.
- Create a safe zone clear of all vegetation for equipment.
- Clear vegetation around fuel tanks and other highly combustible equipment.

### Prepare Your Animals

- Create a livestock evacuation plan.
- Ensure proper registering and branding of livestock.
- Establish contingency plan for feeding livestock if graze land is destroyed by fire.



# GET SET – Situational Awareness when a Fire Starts

- Be ready to go when notified.
- Alert family, neighbors and ranch hands.
- 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 ample drinking water.
- Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates, or check the fire department Web site.
- Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and keep an eye on your family and pets until you are ready to leave.

## INSIDE CHECKLIST

- Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.
- Remove lightweight curtains.
- Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- Shut off the air conditioning.

## OUTSIDE CHECKLIST

- Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc.) or move away from home.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running - they can waste critical water pressure.
- Leave exterior lights on.
- Back your car into the driveway. Shut doors and roll up windows.
- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals if time permits.

## Your Property

- Open/unlock gates so livestock can escape flames.
- Hook up your stock trailer and load your animals.
- Close all gates behind horses if they cannot be loaded; they WILL run back into a burning building.
- Move equipment into a safe zone that is clear of combustible fuels.
- Close all doors and windows and turn on exterior/interior lights in barns and other structures.
- Shut off gas supply and propane tanks.
- Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.
- Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.



# 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

Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildland fire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to leave, don't 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 and equipment. Choose an escape route away from the fire.

## WHAT TO TAKE

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



## EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

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 the American Red Cross Web site at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

- Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day).
- Non-perishable food for all family members and pets (three-day supply).
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- Important family documents and contact numbers.
- Map marked with evacuation routes.
- Prescriptions or special medications.
- Family photos and other irreplaceable items.
- Easily carried valuables.
- Personal computers (information on hard drives and disks).
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.

Note: Keep a pair of old shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.



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

# My Oklahoma Wildland Fire Action Guide

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-State Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Evacuation Routes: \_\_\_\_\_

Where to Go: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Emergency Supply Kit: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_





# READY, SET, GO!

## Residential Safety Checklist: Tips To Improve Family and Property Survival During A Wildland Fire

Home	Yes	No
1. Does your home have a metal, composition, or tile (or other non-combustible) roof?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are the rain gutters and roof free of leaves, needles and branches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are all vent openings screened with 1/8 inch (or smaller) mesh metal screen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are approved spark arrestors on chimneys?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the house have noncombustible siding material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are the eaves "boxed in" using noncombustible materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are the windows double-paned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Is the underdeck area free of combustible material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Is all firewood at least 30 feet from the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Defensible Space	Yes	No
1. Is dead vegetation removed in the recommended defensible space area? (Consider adding distance if your home is on a steep slope.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is there separation between shrubs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are ladder fuels removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is there a clean and green area extending at least 30 feet from the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the 0-5 feet zone have noncombustible materials and non-woody vegetation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is there recommended separation between the crowns of trees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Emergency Access	Yes	No
1. Is the home address visible from the street?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is the home address made of fire-resistant materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are street signs present at every intersection leading to the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are street signs made of fire-resistant materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is combustible vegetation within 10 feet of the driveway planned and are overhanging obstructions removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. If a long driveway is present, does it have a suitable turnaround area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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[www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org)

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