

Every year, Florida experiences severe wildfires—wildfires that destroy homes, disrupt people's lives and impact the state economy. On average, Florida experiences the second highest number of wildfires in the nation and wildfires have struck every Florida county in recent years.

Wildfire season in Florida is considered to be 12 months long, since fires can occur at any time of the year.

Few fire departments have adequate resources to protect every single home or business in their jurisdiction. Therefore, residents must become partners in fire protection.

## A DISASTER PLAN

The time to plan for a fire emergency is now. Take a few minutes to discuss with your family what actions you will need to take.

- \* Post your local fire department's phone number in a visible place in your home.
- \* If you must evacuate, decide where you will go and how you will get there. Unlike evacuating for a hurricane, with wildfires you may only have a moments notice. Have two escape routes: one out of your home and one out of your neighborhood are preferable.
- \* Have tools available: shovel, rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, and a 2 gallon bucket
- \* Maintain an adequate water source.
- \* Have a plan for your pets.
- \* Practice family fire drills.

Evacuations for a wildfire can occur without notice; When wildfire conditions exist, BE ALERT.

*Weather is one of the most significant factors in determining the severity of wildfires, regardless of their cause. The intensity of fires and the rate with which they spread is directly related to the wind speed, temperature and relative humidity. Climatic conditions such as long-term drought also play a major role in the number and intensity of wildfires.*

The National Weather Service will issue **Fire Danger Statements, Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings** when the weather is favorable for wildfire development.

**Red Flag Warnings** mean weather conditions very favorable for the spread of wildfires are occurring now or will begin to occur in the near future. When a Red Flag Warning is issued, everyone should use extreme caution when handling flammable materials and open flames because if a wildfire develops, it will spread rapidly.

**Fire Weather Watches** mean weather conditions are expected to become favorable for rapid wildfire growth. A slight change in the weather (an increase in wind speed or temperatures or a decrease in relative humidity) may allow the wildfire threat to increase significantly. Everyone should

listen for later forecasts and possible Red Flag Warnings.

**Fire Danger Statements** mean that the potential exists for wildfires to develop and spread, but weather conditions are not severe enough for a Red Flag Warning to be issued. When a Fire Danger Statement is issued, it means that everyone with flammable objects should use caution because the current weather conditions are somewhat favorable for wildfire development and spread.



The top 3 causes of wildfires in Florida are: arson, escaped trash/yard debris burning, and lightning.

Develop a personal disaster plan and a plan for evacuating your home, in case a wildfire threatens YOUR home or business.

For more information visit:

Florida Division of Forestry  
[www.fl-dof.com](http://www.fl-dof.com)

Firewise  
[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

Florida Division of  
Emergency Management  
[www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org)



# A Guide to Wildfire Safety

## Homeowner Fire Reduction Practices

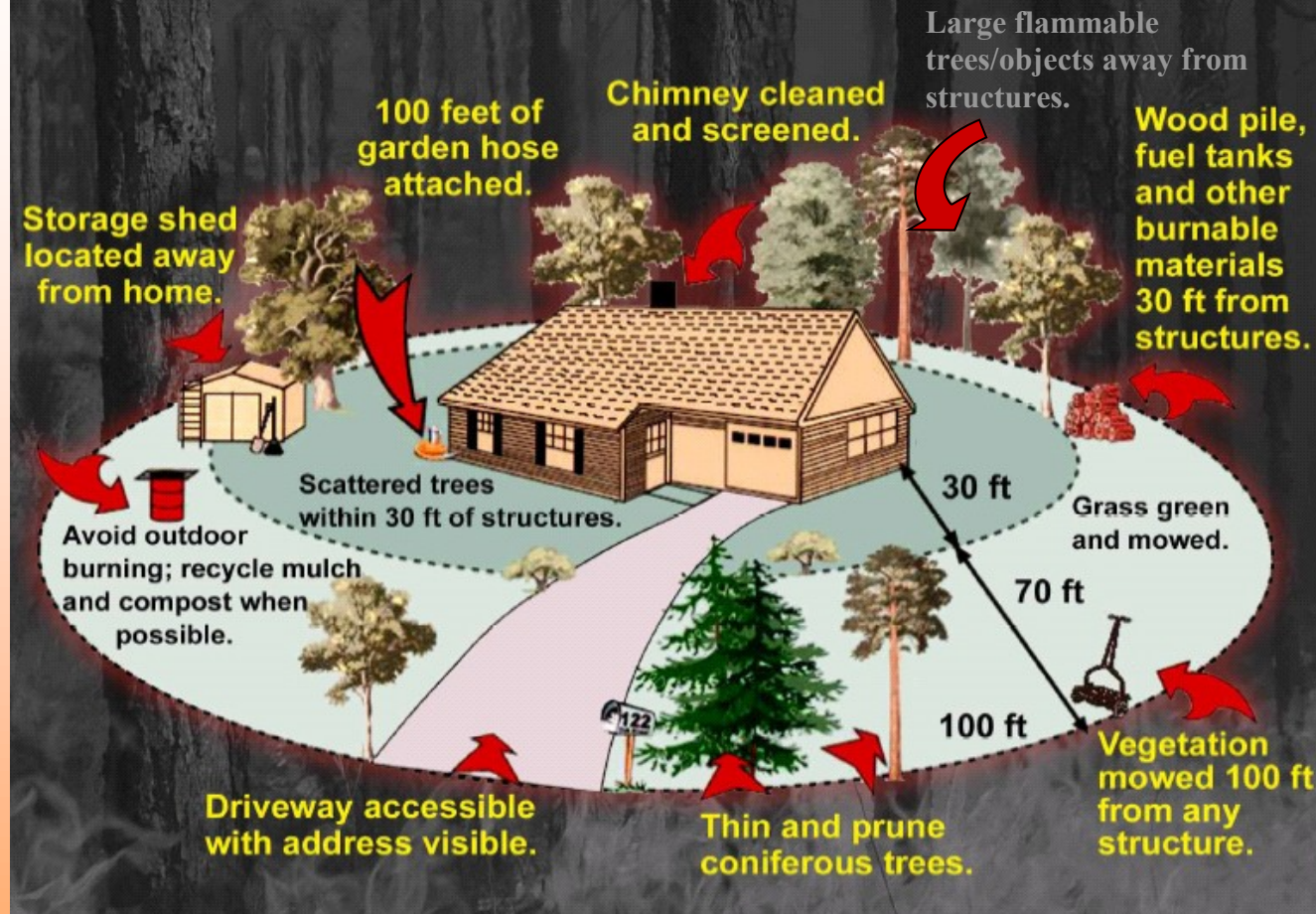
Most homes are damaged or destroyed by wildfires because of ignitions in the two most vulnerable parts of a home: the roof and the area immediately around the structure. Homeowners can help reduce losses from wildfires through careful landscaping and home maintenance. Follow these safety tips to reduce the risk of a wildfire affecting your home:

- ➊ Create a defensible or buffer space around your house by clearing all of the most flammable vegetation within 30 feet of the structure.
- ➋ Keep gutters, eaves, and yards clear of debris, sticks, pine needles and leaves. Also, remember to clean around and under patios or decks.
- ➌ Trim all tree branches that hang over the house or are lower than 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- ➍ Regularly mow weedy areas and keep lawn watered (at least 1" per week).
- ➎ Use fire resistant construction materials when possible and fire resistant barriers such as rockbeds and stone mulch.
- ➏ Plant fire resistant plants. Carefully space trees to reduce vegetation density.
- ➐ Cover your chimney outlet or flue with a spark arresting 1/2 inch mesh metal screen.
- ➑ Properly dispose of yard waste. Do not move it to a nearby vacant lot.

**Follow local regulations for the burning or disposal of yard waste and other materials. Obey local burn bans.**

[www.fl-dof.com/wildfire/laws\\_trash\\_burning.html](http://www.fl-dof.com/wildfire/laws_trash_burning.html)

# Are you Firewise?



Maintaining a "Lean, Clean and Green" landscape near the house can make a difference in whether a home survives a wildfire. Most importantly, action must be taken *before* a wildfire threatens to reduce the possibility of wildfire damage.



- small amount of flammable vegetation
- no accumulation of dead vegetation
- plants are healthy and green; lawn is well irrigated



## Fire-Resistant Vegetation

**Grass:**  
St. Augustine, Buffalo

**Trees:**  
Banana, Birch, Bottlebrush, Citrus, Dogwood, Florida Soapberry, Live Oak, Loquat, Magnolia, Maple, Redbud, Sago Palm, Sugarberry, Sycamore, Willows, Winged Elm

**Shrubs/Plants:**  
Agave, Aloe, Azalea, Beautyberry, Bird of Paradise, Daylily, Ferns, Gazania, Geranium, Honeysuckle, Iris, Jasmine, Lantana, Lavender, Periwinkle, Philodendron, Pineapple, Sparkleberry, Sweetgum, Viburnum, Yucca

**Avoid:** Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper or Cedar mulch, Pine trees, Cypress trees, Fountain grass, Palmetto trees and Coconut Palm trees



The "Firewise" program helps homeowners reduce the threat of wildfire around their homes. Homeowners can make their yards fire resistant by planting specific species of vegetation and landscaping in a way that fire will not threaten their homes. Learn more information at [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).