

# Home Ignition Zone Self-Assessment for Homeowners

Protecting Your Home from wildfire

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

Dear Wisconsin Homeowner:

Research has shown that the characteristics of buildings and their immediate surroundings determine the risk of ignition during a wildfire.

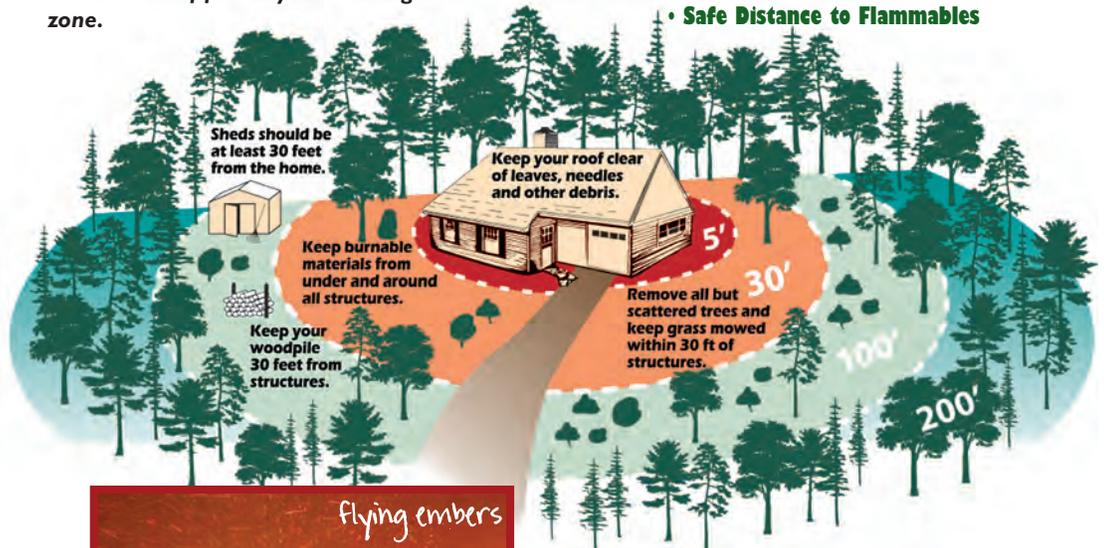
That's why preparing your home and the area around your home, known as the home ignition zone, is so important. The steps you take to reduce or change the fuels in your home ignition zone could determine whether or not your house survives a wildfire. For example, raking leaves out of your yard may prevent a surface fire from burning right up to your house. A windblown ember which lands in a metal gutter free of pine needles will not have any fuel to ignite and so will extinguish. Since you, as the homeowner, are the only one who has authority to make changes around your home, you have a vital role in protecting it.

## The Home Ignition Zone

*The Home Ignition Zone is your home and its surroundings out to 100-200 feet. You can make your home Firewise by reducing the amount of fuel in your home ignition zone.*

**A Firewise Home Has...**

- Fire-Resistant Construction
- Lean, Clean and Green Landscaping
- Regular Maintenance
- Safe Distance to Flammables



### 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 starving a wildfire of the fuel it needs to burn.

### Start right away.

Study of past fires has 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 form or if

you'd like more information on what you can do to better prepare your home for wildfire, contact your local ranger station or:

**WDNR - Forestry**  
PO Box 7921  
Madison, WI 53707  
Forestry.Webmail@wisconsin.gov

Learn more at:  
dnr.wi.gov and search for "firewise"  
Firewise.org



## Fire-Resistant Construction

### Roof is made of fire-resistant materials

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home and at the most risk of being ignited by flying embers. For this reason, it is very important that roofing materials be fire-resistant. A roof that is not fire-resistant is a critical factor, meaning that this issue alone can result in home loss should flying embers or flames come in contact with the roof. Use Class-A asphalt shingles, metal, or other fire-resistant roofing material.

### Exterior walls are fire-resistant

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Ideally, exterior walls on buildings in fire-prone areas should be made of fire-resistant materials such as brick, stone, or logs. These products are much better 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 buildings.

### Eaves/vents are enclosed with wire mesh

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

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 wire mesh with openings not more than 1/8 inch in size. Eaves should be boxed in with 5/8 inch nominal sheathing or other non-combustible material.

### Decks and porches are made of fire-resistant materials

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Anything attached to a building should be considered part of that building. 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. It is important to eliminate all flammable materials from these areas, including things such as door mats, charcoal, firewood, and fallen leaves and needles.

Fire-resistant shingles and log siding



Fire-resistant concrete porch



Fire-resistant brick siding

# Lean, Clean & Green Landscaping

## Vegetation is away from windows

- Yes
- No

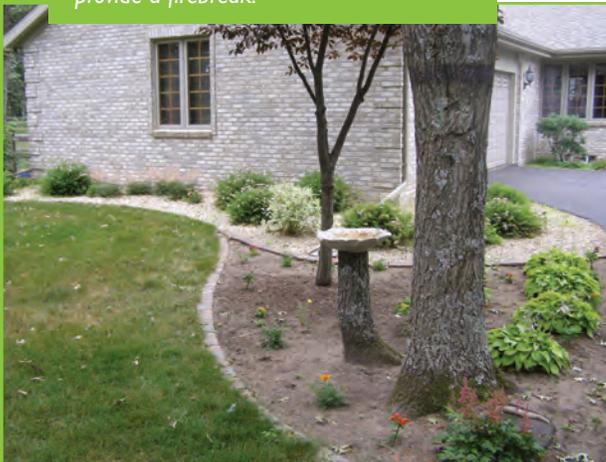
Windows can break when exposed to heat which can allow embers to enter your home. Keep the area around windows clear of flammable vegetation such as evergreen shrubs and trees as well as tall plants.

## Plants within 3-5 feet of the home are low-growing, well-maintained and deciduous

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

While plants are not recommended in this area, it should be noted that deciduous trees and shrubs (those that drop their leaves in the fall) are preferable to evergreens (needled trees and shrubs). Any plants in this area should be well-spaced, well-maintained and interspersed with non-flammable materials.

*Bare dirt and rock are used here for mulch. Plants are low-growing, and mostly deciduous. Brick border and mowed, green grass provide a firebreak.*



## Bare dirt, mowed grass or non-combustible mulch within 3-5 feet of the home

- Yes
- No

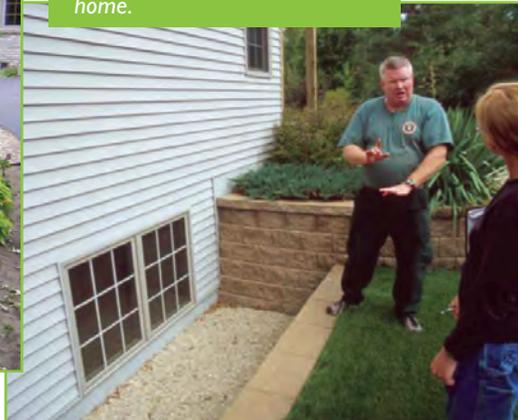
A 3-5 foot "no grow" zone around building foundations can keep a surface fire or flying embers from igniting a building. Ideally, these areas would be filled in with non-flammable materials such as brick or decorative stone rather than wood mulch.

## Limited evergreens within 30 feet of the home

- Yes
- No

Evergreens are highly flammable due to the high volume of oils within the needles and resin within the bark. Keep evergreens at least 10 feet from buildings and at least 10 feet from each other (measuring from the branches) – this will help keep fire from jumping tree to tree and burning up to your home.

*These windows have adequate clearance from plants. The rock mulch is a good choice near the home.*



*Rock mulch is used here. Plants are low-growing, and mostly deciduous near the home. Driveway and mowed, green grass provide firebreak. Yard trees are also mainly deciduous and are limited near the home.*

## Vegetation is thinned in the zone 30 to 100 feet of the home

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

The area that extends out 30-100 feet around buildings can be very important in slowing an advancing wildfire, but only if the vegetation is regularly thinned and pruned. Thin trees and shrubs to allow at least 10 feet of space between them.

This is especially important for evergreens. The purpose of thinning trees and shrubs is to reduce the likelihood that fire will jump from plant to plant. Once a fire's ability to transfer to others plants is reduced, the fire will quickly and dramatically lose intensity. When choosing which trees or shrubs to remove, choose the ones that are the least vigorous and healthy, and remove evergreens over deciduous trees.

## Regular Maintenance

### Fallen leaves, pine needles and other debris are cleared off the roof, out of gutters and window wells, underneath decks and away from foundations

- Yes  
 No

Roofs, decks, porches, balconies and gutters provide ideal locations for flying embers to land, smolder, and ignite. A roof or gutter filled with leaves or needles can be a critical factor during a wildfire, meaning this alone can determine whether a building survives or not. Decks, porches, and balconies are natural stopping places for fallen leaves and needles. They are generally open at the bottom and these areas often fill in with dead leaves, needles, and other flammable materials. Remove these materials and consider putting wire screens (no larger than 1/8 inch) over gutters and below wood attachments to simplify future maintenance.

### Tree limbs are trimmed back at least 10 feet from roof

- Yes  
 No  
 Not applicable

Windy conditions that exist during a wildfire can cause flames and flying



Although deck is wood construction, the underneath is "boxed in" to keep out debris. Deck is also clear of flammables on the surface and surrounded by a concrete walkway and mowed lawn.

embers to travel from surrounding trees to nearby buildings. Branches overhanging a roof can cause a building to ignite should that tree catch fire. Keep trees and tree limbs at least 10 feet from all buildings.

### Powerlines are free of hazards such as overhanging tree branches and/or 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 from areas around power lines.

### Tree branches are pruned 6 feet up from ground (especially evergreens)

- Yes  
 No  
 Not applicable

Keeping trees pruned may prevent a surface fire from catching lower limbs on fire and thus acting as a ladder to move surface fire up into the crowns of



Lawn is kept mowed and raked free of fallen leaves and pine needles.

trees where it can be more difficult to suppress. Low branches should be kept pruned at least 6 feet up from the ground. While this is a general recommendation, never remove more than one third of a tree's branches.

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

- Yes  
 No

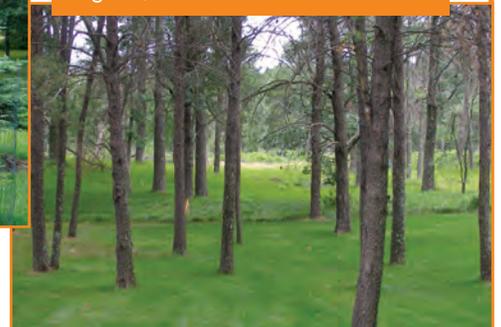
Lawns that are allowed to dry out during times of drought as well as lawns that are covered with fallen leaves, needles, and branches can be critical during a wildfire. With this in mind, keep lawns raked free of leaves, needles, dead branches, and twigs especially when weather conditions make wildfires more probable. Keep grass mowed 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 low intensity flames or flying embers than live vegetation. Therefore, keep trees and shrubs free of dead wood.

*This is the 30-100 foot zone. Although this area is dominated by evergreens, there is space between trees, lower branches are pruned up, and there is a green, mowed lawn.*



# Safe Distance to Flammables

## Outbuildings located within 30 feet of homes or other buildings are clear of flammables

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

If flammable 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 keep flammable materials such as leaves and needles off outbuildings and create a 3-5 foot zone around outbuildings where nothing flammable is allowed, especially when outbuildings are within 30 feet of other buildings.

the building will also ignite. Store firewood and other flammable materials at least 30 feet from all buildings. Go one step further and create a cleared area around these flammables.

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

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

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

## Nearby neighbors have 30 feet of defensible space around their homes

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

Sometimes buildings may be more flammable than the surrounding vegetation. This is especially true if they are made of flammable materials or if a lack of upkeep and maintenance increases the possibility of ignition. Talk to your neighbors about your concern regarding wildfire safety and work together to lower your overall risk. Remember: fire does not respect property boundaries.



*This home is both forested and Firewise. Although the lot is wooded, there are few trees within 30 feet of the home. It's important that your nearby neighbors also prepare their homes for wildfire because the decisions they make can affect you! Share what you learn about how to be Firewise.*



*The firewood is stacked 30 feet from the home.*

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

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

A pile of cured firewood and other flammable materials like brush piles, stacked lumber, and broken down vehicles are particularly at risk of ignition from flying embers and surface fire. If such materials catch on fire and they are near a building, it is highly likely that



*The area around this propane tank is free of vegetation and other flammable material.*

# Safe Distance

