

Preparing a **Personal Wildfire Action Plan**



A PERSONAL WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

READY, SET, GO!

Saving Lives and Property Through Advance Planning



Wildfire is a Reality in Woodmoor

Fire is, and always has been, a natural part of the beautiful area we live in. Unfortunately, it is not a question of “if” but rather “when” the next wildfire will occur. The fire season is a reality here throughout the year. Wildfires are fueled by the build-up of dry vegetation and are driven by the wind, often erratic, which drives them quickly out of control. In a dry year this can be an extreme danger.

The Wildland Environment

We live in the Wildland Urban Interface. We are also in the Ember Zone which means that our homes are at risk from wind-driven embers from a wildland fire but not necessarily from the fire itself. Ember storms are the major cause of homes being destroyed often burning through whole neighborhoods as seen in Mountain Shadows in 2012. Fires occur in Woodmoor every year but so far have been quickly controlled before they could spread. We dare not assume this trend will continue forever.

How To Prepare For A Fire

Our firefighters will make every effort to protect your property from wildfire but during a major event there will not be enough firefighters, equipment or time to defend every home. You can help them by taking certain precautions beforehand so they can better help you when the time comes. In this bulletin you will learn how to:

- make your home resistant to embers;
- provide defensible space around your home;
- use of fire resistant landscaping;
- create an evacuation plan for your family.

Owners Are The First Line of Defense

Successfully preparing for a wildland fire enables you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property. Many Woodmoor residents have built their homes and landscaped their lots without fully understanding the impact a fire could have on them.

The purpose of this bulletin is to help you identify and take appropriate corrective action. It will help you get started with the advance planning that can dramatically increase your personal safety and the survivability of your home and property if and when a wildfire threatens our community.

WOODMOOR FIREWISE COMMITTEE

This publication was prepared by the Woodmoor FireWise Committee. Our mission is to help save lives and property through education. Many of the ideas, text, and photos have come from these partners.



Living in the Wildland Urban Interface And the Ember Zone

PLANNING BEGINS WITH A HOUSE

Defensible Space Works!

You should provide firefighters with defensible space they need to protect your home. The buffer zone you create by removing weeds, scrub oak, and trees helps keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risk from flying embers. This will help your house to survive a wildfire.



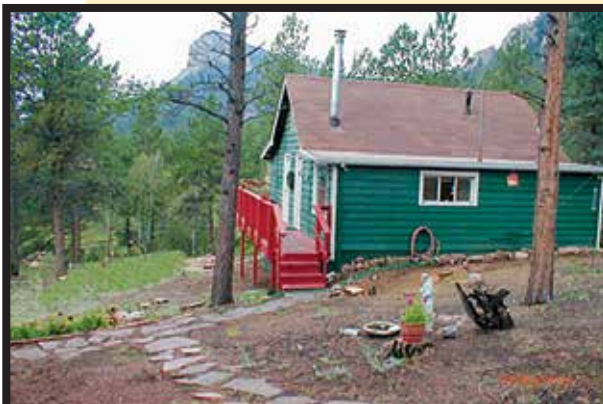
Mt. Shadows home destroyed because of lack of defensible space.



Woodmoor home surrounded by unthinned pine and scrub oak.



Home site before defensible space.



Home site after defensible space.



Home in scrub oak with good defensible space.



Home in pine forest with good defensible space.

What is Defensible Space?



Defensible space is the area of controlled vegetation fuels between a structure and natural vegetation that creates a buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildfire to the structure. It helps to protect the home from igniting from direct flames or indirect radiant heat. It is essential for structure survivability during wildland fire conditions.

ZONE ONE

Zone 1 extends 15 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc...

- Remove all dead or dying vegetation.
- Remove overhanging branches to a minimum of 10 feet from the roof and chimney.
- Remove dry leaves and pine needles from the yard, roof and rain gutters.
- Relocate woodpiles into Zone 2 uphill and 30 feet from the house.
- Remove combustible material and vegetation from around and under decks.
- Avoid planting junipers and other flammable landscape plants within 5 feet of the house or under decks.
- Remove "ladder fuels", or low-level vegetation, that can allow a fire to spread from the ground to the tree canopy or structure.
- Remove all scrub oak in Zone 1 and out to 30 feet from the house.

ZONE TWO

Zone 2 extends 15 to 85 feet (or property line) from buildings and decks.

You can minimize the chance of fire jumping from plant to plant by removing dead material and/or thinning the vegetation.

- Remove "ladder fuels" from under pine trees.
- Break up scrub oak into islands spaced 2.5 times its height; prune branches up to 50% of total height.
- Keep native grasses to a maximum height of 6 inches.
- Remove enough pine and other evergreen trees to create an average 10-foot separation between tips of the tree branches.

For more information on defensible space recommendations see www.woodmoor.org or call (719) 488-2693

Why “Harden” Your Home?

Most buildings that burn during a wildfire are ignited by spot fires started by embers, not by direct contact with the wildfire flame.

ROOF: Shake roofs are particularly vulnerable. Embers lodge in crevices and valleys, smolder undetected, and ignite spot fires.



EAVES: Heat trapped from embers and spot fires gathering beneath the eaves make them easier to ignite and allow flames access to the attic.

GUTTERS: Embers collect and ignite accumulated needles and leaves. Another attic access point for fire.

VENTS: Flying embers find a way inside if the vent is unscreened. →



← **SIDING:** Embers collect in siding gaps and openings, start spot fires, then takes flames directly to windows and eaves.

← **WINDOWS and DOORS:** Glass will fail before the structure ignites and gaps around doors (e.g. under garage doors) allow embers inside.

BALCONIES, DECKS & WINDOW WELLS:

These collect needles, leaves, embers and firebrands then take fire to siding, windows, and sliding glass doors. Risk is dramatically increased if you store combustibles below.

REMEMBER: Patio furniture, awnings, gas grills, etc. add risk when wildfire threatens. →



FENCES: Combustible fencing along with pine needles, leaves, and dry grasses collecting at the bottom of the fence will bring fire right up to the building.

“Hardening” your Home against Ember Attacks: *Ready your Home for Wildfire*

STORE FLAMMABLES AWAY FROM HOUSE (30ft min):

- Firewood and lumber.
- Sheds.
- Flammable personal property when wildfire threatens (or place in the garage).

ROOF: *most vulnerable part of home.*

- Class A rated covering and underlayment.
- Inspect and remove debris routinely, especially roof-to-wall collection points.
- Remove overhanging / nearby branches.
- Plug openings, crevices, and gaps.
- Tempered glass skylights (not plastic).

VERTICAL ATTIC VENT: *ember entry.*

- Use a baffle or screen behind louvers.
- 1/8” metal mesh or smaller.

ADDRESSING: *aid emergency response.*

- Large, easy to see numbers.
- Both sides of mailbox and on house.
- House visible / accessible from road.

EAVES & SOFFITS: *heat traps.*

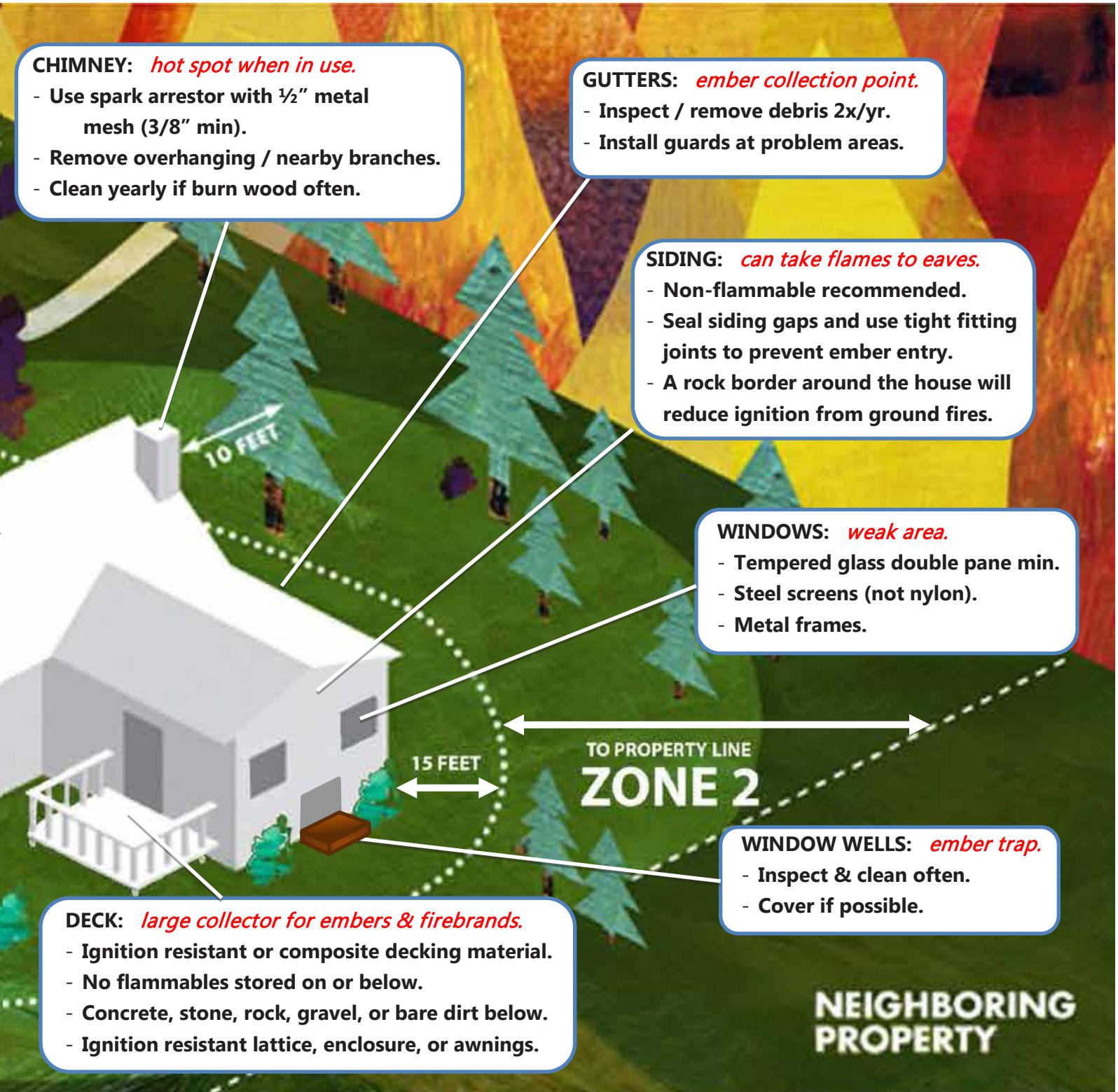
- Enclose eaves & seal gaps using non-combustible or flame-retardant material.
- Remove underlying flammable vegetation.

ZONE 1

ROAD

IMPROVE YOUR WILDFIRE SURVIVABILITY

- Improve your family's safety and your home's ability to survive a wildfire.
- Eliminate weak points that let a fire into your home.
- Reduce ignitability of new and existing homes.



CHIMNEY: *hot spot when in use.*

- Use spark arrestor with ½" metal mesh (3/8" min).
- Remove overhanging / nearby branches.
- Clean yearly if burn wood often.

GUTTERS: *ember collection point.*

- Inspect / remove debris 2x/yr.
- Install guards at problem areas.

SIDING: *can take flames to eaves.*

- Non-flammable recommended.
- Seal siding gaps and use tight fitting joints to prevent ember entry.
- A rock border around the house will reduce ignition from ground fires.

WINDOWS: *weak area.*

- Tempered glass double pane min.
- Steel screens (not nylon).
- Metal frames.

WINDOW WELLS: *ember trap.*

- Inspect & clean often.
- Cover if possible.

DECK: *large collector for embers & firebrands.*

- Ignition resistant or composite decking material.
- No flammables stored on or below.
- Concrete, stone, rock, gravel, or bare dirt below.
- Ignition resistant lattice, enclosure, or awnings.

HELP THE FIRE DEPARTMENT HELP YOU!

CREATE YOUR PERSONAL WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

“READY, SET, GO!”

GET READY | Prepare for the Fire Threat



Now that you've done everything you can to protect your house, it is time to prepare your family. Your Personal Wildfire Action Plan must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire. Use the following checklists to help you gain a situational awareness of the threat and to prepare your Plan. For more information on property and home preparedness before a fire threat, review the checklist on the Firewise Communities at www.firewise.org.

- 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.
- Keep an extra emergency supply kit in your car in case you can't get to your home because of fire.
- Know your children's school emergency evacuation policy and periodically quiz them about it.
- Work with your neighbors to identify:
 - People with special needs (see p. 11).
 - People who need transportation to an evacuation center (see p. 11).
 - A communication plan with telephone notification tree in case of emergency.

Situational Awareness when a Fire Starts | “Getting Set”



- Evacuate as soon as you are able to go.
- Alert family and neighbors.
- Dress in appropriate clothing, made with natural fibers, i.e. cotton, and work boots. Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- Ensure that you have your emergency supply kit that includes all necessary items, such as battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, medicine prescriptions, and ample drinking water.
- Stay tuned to your local TV or radio stations for updates.
- 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.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains.
- Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Shut off natural gas at the meter.
- Leave your inside house 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.)
- Turn off any 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.

IF YOU ARE TRAPPED: SURVIVAL TIPS

- Stay inside your house away from outside walls and windows.
- Patrol inside your home for spot fires and extinguish them.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
- Stay hydrated.
- Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire. Remember if it’s hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside.
- Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.
- Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- If your house catches fire, move to the far end of it and close windows and inside doors to restrict the spread of the fire. When it is safe to do so, exit your house and move to the “blackened” area of your property or neighborhood that has already burned. It is safer to be in an area that has already burned than an area not yet burned.



Leave Early | GO!

Evacuate as soon as you are able to go. 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, please leave.

WHERE TO GO

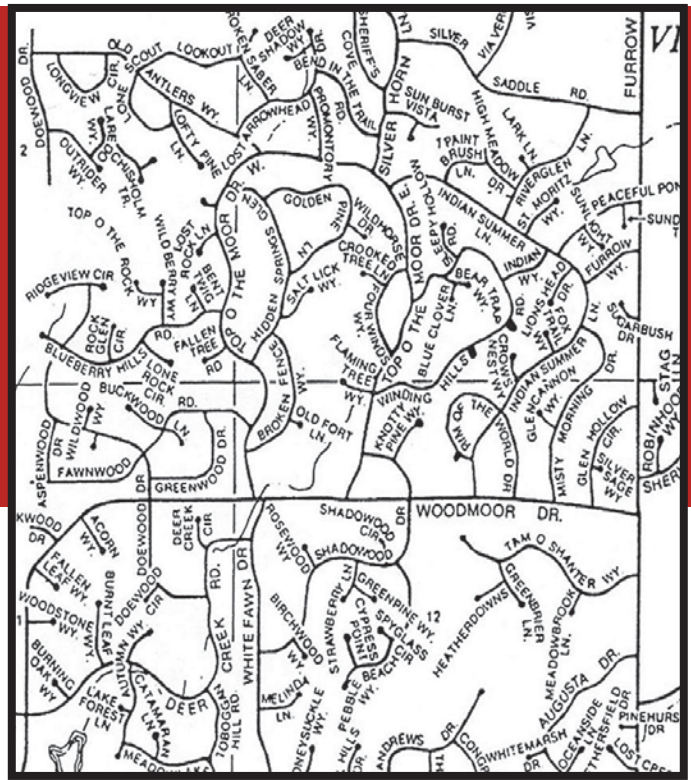
Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a friend's or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

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, visit the American Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org.

- 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.

**Post this plan in a location where every member of your family can see it.
Rehearse it with your family.**

My Personal Wildland Fire Action Plan

During High Fire Danger days in Woodmoor, monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your plan.

Important Phone Numbers:

Out-of-State Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Work: _____

School: _____

Other: _____

Evacuation Routes: _____

Where to Go: _____

Location of Emergency Supply Kit: _____

Notes: _____

Important Phone Numbers And References:

- Register cell phones for **Reverse 9-1-1** emergency notifications at www.elpasoteller911.org or (719) 471-6700.
- Register residents needing evacuation assistance because of age, disabilities, or impairments: Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District at (719) 484-0911.
- More information on Defensible Space, hardening homes, and related topics: see www.woodmoor.org, www.firewise.org, and www.csfs.colostate.edu.



Dear Woodmoor resident,

The 2012 Waldo Canyon wildfire and destruction of homes in Mountain Shadows has been a “wake-up” call for Woodmoor. It showed how a combination of drought, winds, terrain, and unusual wind changes can destroy homes without warning. Burning embers ignited most of these houses. Most were located in moderate fire hazard grassland found in South Woodmoor between Fairplay Drive and I-25. Fortunately, none were in the more hazardous pine and scrub oak forest common to Woodmoor or more homes would have been lost.

We hope you will use this bulletin to make a personal Wildfire Action Plan. You should consider important questions about what you would do if we had a wildfire emergency. For example:

- What would you take with you if you had only 30 minutes warning to evacuate?
- How would you get out of your neighborhood if your usual exit roads were blocked?
- Can your home survive a wildfire without the help of firefighters?

Woodmoor FireWise Committee



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