

HOMIEOWNERS GUIDE

Creation and Maintenance of the Home Ignition Zone

To Protect Your Home from a Wildland Fire



ADDRESS

Before we get into talking about the Zones, let's look at your address. Does your home have the ADDRESS posted at the end of the driveway and on your Home so that emergency responders can find your home? Is the address RELECTIVE so that responders can see the address in the dark, in smoke, or after a snow storm?

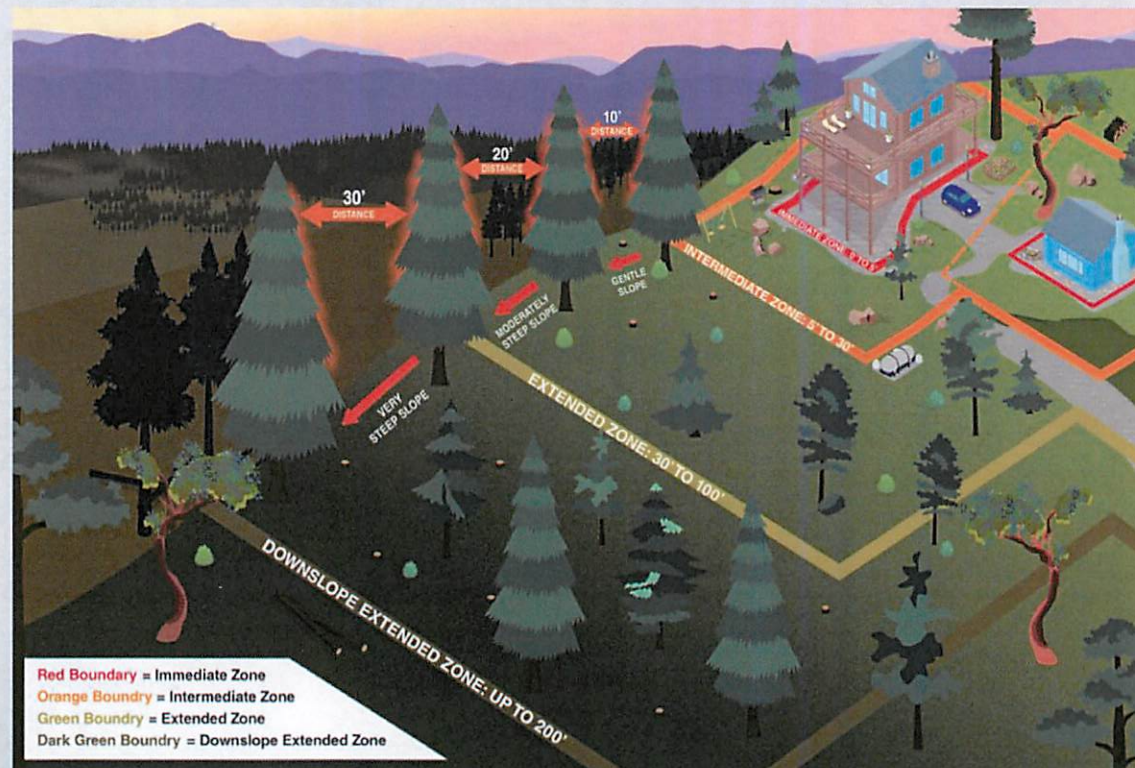


There are 3 Zones that we will look at:

Zone 1: The Home and 5 feet around the Home

Zone 2: 5 to 100 feet around the Home

Zone 3: outside of 100 feet from Home



Source: Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. "Home Ignition Zone." JPEG.

Is Your HOME IGNITION ZONE Ready for a Wildfire?

The first and most important zone is Zone 1. This is the Home and 0 to 5 feet of noncombustible adjacent area next to the foundation and under the decks.



Zone 1 Step 1: The Home

**Where to start?
Walk around your
home and look for
areas that could
allow embers to
gain access to
flammable materials.**



Walls and Siding

Look at the walls, siding and trim. Look for any cracks or gaps that embers can get into that could start a fire. These small cracks can be filled with caulk so that embers could not get into the cracks and would fall to the ground.



Decks

Check for weathered decking with large cracks or decayed material. Gaps between the deck and wall are spaces embers can get into. Routinely remove debris from your deck as well as from gaps between decking or deck framing. Patio furniture with cushions catches fire easily, even from embers. Tables, plants, hammocks, and welcome mats can all put your deck and home at risk.



Windows and Doors

Check for cracks and gaps in the same way as the siding and trim. Check to see if there is debris between screens and windows, if so clean out the debris. Check to see if windows are multiple-pane. If they are single pane, plan to upgrade to multiple-pane. These windows are able to withstand the heat in a wildland urban interface fire and will save you money on your heating bills in the winter.

Note: If you are evacuated, close all the windows and doors.



Eaves and Gables

Check for cracks and gaps and caulk if needed. Look for roof vents, gable and crawl space vents that come standard with 1/4 inch steel screen. The 1/4 inch screen can allow embers through the screen into the soffit or attic at a rate of 100 embers per minute. Replace these with 1/8 inch steel screen. If accessible, you can put the 1/8 inch screen behind the 1/4 inch screen on the back side of the vent out of view.



Roof and Gutters

Clean roof and gutters. Remove dead leaves, debris, and pine needles that could catch embers. The edge overhang of shingles should have a metal drip edge. Asphalt shingles are resistant to embers on the asphalt side but the underside can and will readily catch on fire.

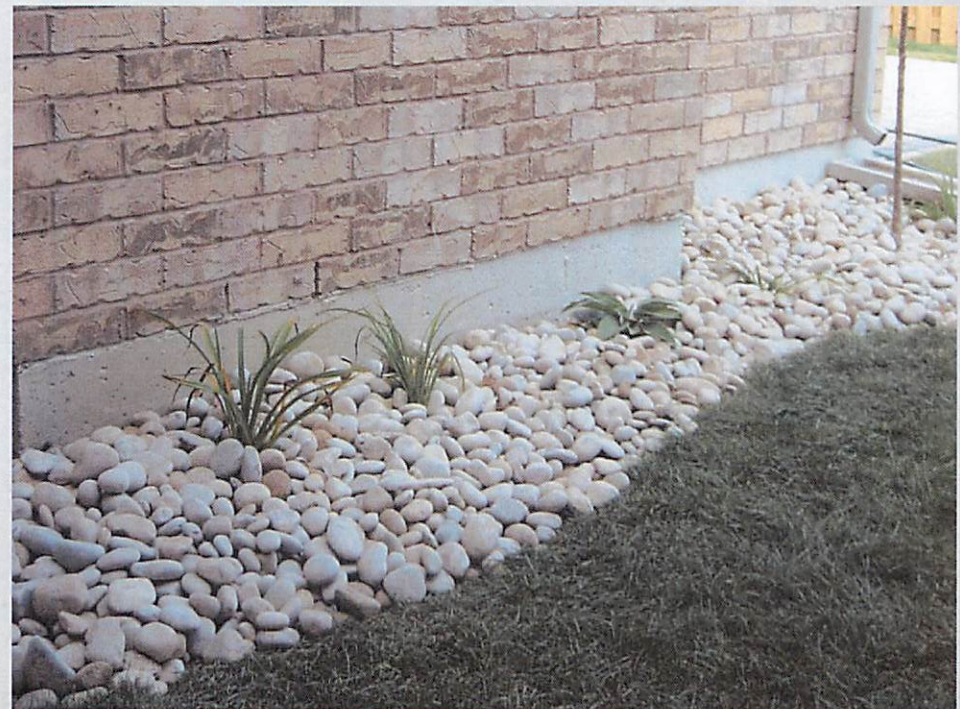


Once you have the home ready, the next step is the foundation and the first 5 feet around the home including under the deck. If an ember hits the home and can't find a place to stay, it falls to the ground. If it falls on a non-combustible surface then it is no threat to your home.



Zone 1 Step 2: The first 5 feet around your home

Have the first 5 feet around your home be non-combustible surfaces, such as pavers, rock, or gravel. Mulch next to the foundation puts your home at risk. Embers could land and ignite the mulch.



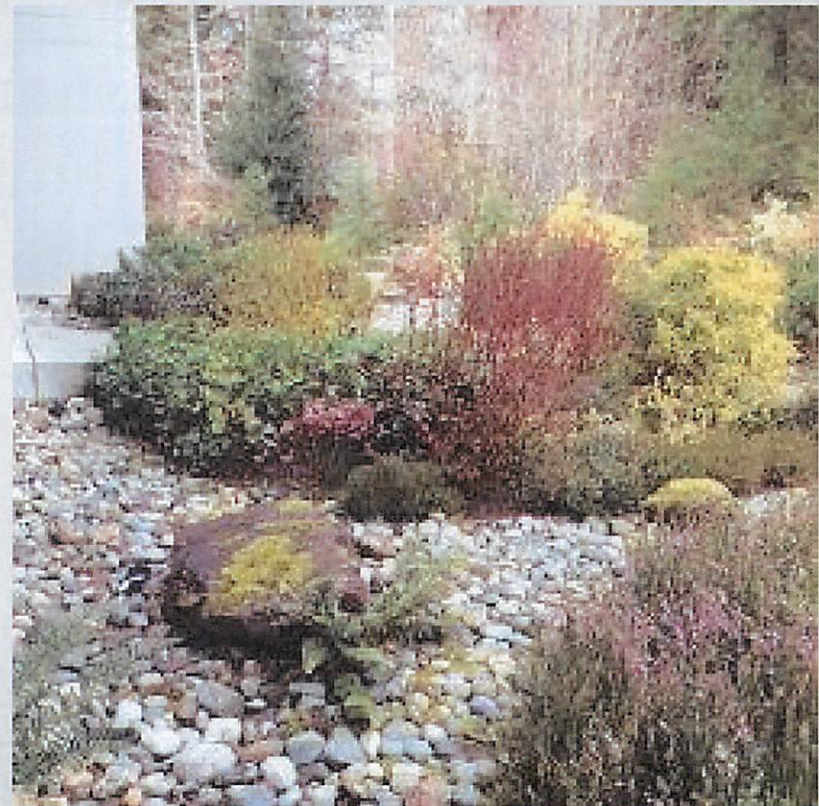
Under the Deck

This area should be noncombustible. A fire under a deck will quickly start the deck on fire and extend to the structure itself. Firewood and other flammable materials should be stored somewhere else.



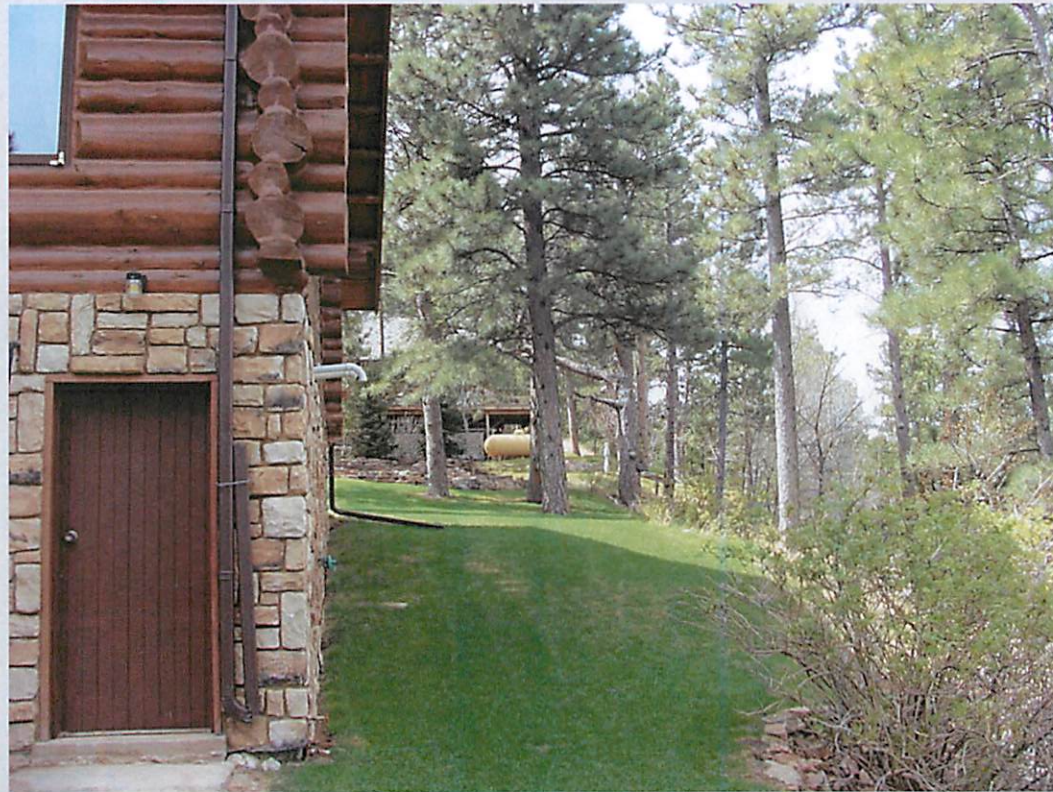
Plant Cover

The use of deciduous plants is a great choice because they generally have a higher moisture content. Trim dead branches and clean leaf litter from under shrubs. Give them frequent irrigation.



Zone 2: 5 feet to 100 feet around the home

This zone is the lawn around your home with the trees limbed up 6 to 8 feet. The grass is frequently irrigated. Having a clean and green area around your home prevents the spread of embers if they fall in this area.



Lawn Care

Try to have a minimum of 30 feet of lawn in this zone.
Grass in the 30 to 100 feet area should be cut 2 to 4 inches high.



Trees

Isolated or small groupings of trees or shrubs can be in the areas over 30 feet from the home. Trees should be limbed 6 to 8 feet off the ground. Keep debris from building up around the tree trunk. A best practice is to have minimal flammable material at the base of the trees so fire won't climb the tree base.



**Trees limbed up
and grass cut**

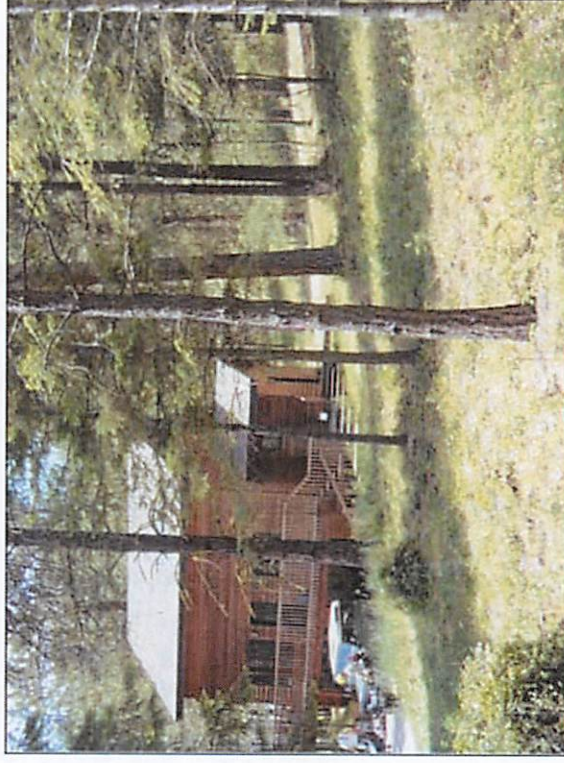


**Fire behavior
greatly reduced**

Before



After



Source: County official from Missoula, Montana

Driveway

Don't forget the driveway.

This is access for you and firefighters.

Thin fuels on both sides of roadway to reduce fire intensity.



Propane Tanks

Propane tanks should be at least 30 feet from your home. Have rock or another non-combustible surface under the tank. Propane tanks are not a big problem if they don't have direct flame contact.



Firewood

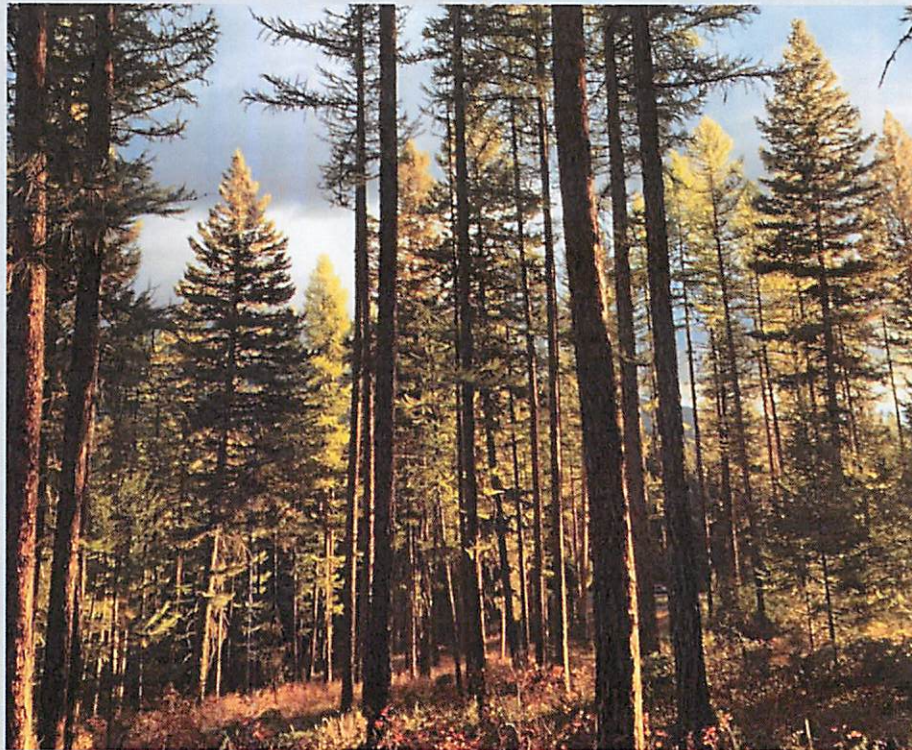
We know that we don't want to go too far for an armload of firewood in the winter. However, that stack of firewood is a receptive place for an ember. It can start the stack on fire and be a danger to your home.

Stack firewood 30 feet from any structure. Don't stack firewood between trees. If the wood catches on fire, it could start the trees on fire.



Zone 3: Outside of 100 feet from the home

The goal for this zone should be to keep the fire on the ground through improving forest health and fuel modification. This type of area will limit the fire from building energy and keep it as a surface fire that limits the amount of embers generated that impact your home.



Create a mix of trees, grass, and shrubs in this area. Walking paths that are 6 to 8 feet wide and can be cut with a string trimmer are best. Montana DNRC Service Foresters can provide technical advice and assist with your management plan.



Zone 3 Objectives

These objectives are the same if you own a few acres of forest land or if you are a large landowner.



- Reduce risk of catastrophic wildfire**
- Improve forest health, tree vigor, and tree growth rates**
- Control noxious weeds**
- Maintain or improve wildlife habitat**
- Maintain or improve water quality**
- Maintain an aesthetically pleasing forest environment**

Timber Land

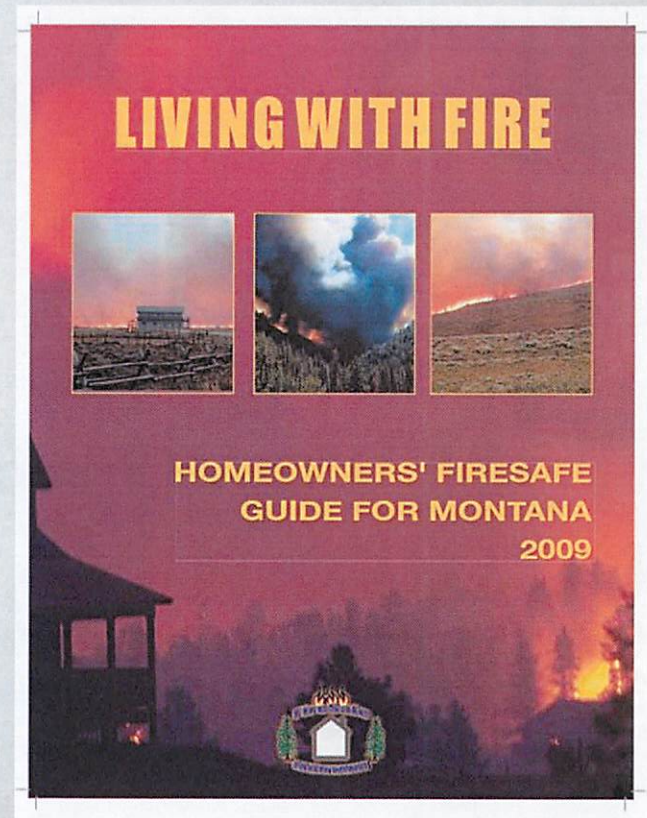
Timber lands that are managed have a better chance of surviving a wildland fire by having the fire stay mostly on the ground. With small islands of cover for wildlife you might even see more wildlife than you have in the past.

The large trees will have more water and nutrients to thrive and grow faster. New seedlings will sprout and the brush and grass will be healthier. Your property values may even be higher than with all dead black trees.



Questions

Your local fire department, County Fire Warden, Office of Emergency Services, DNRC, USFS and your local Fire Safe Council are all available to answer questions you may have. You can also check the Facebook page for the Office of Emergency Services.
www.facebook.com/FlatheadOES.



Community

As you evaluate your own home it is a good time to look at your neighborhood as well. Are there open spaces or parks in your subdivision? Your Home Ignition Zone may overlap with your neighbors. Are other homeowners preparing their homes? Consider working together and becoming a Firewise community. Fire Safe Montana and FIREWISE are two places with more information to help you.

www.firewise.org

www.wildlandfirersg.org

www.fireadapted.org

www.disastersafety.org/wildfire



FIREWISE USA[®]
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Ignition Resistant Construction
Guide



A Guide to Smart Construction and Wildfire Mitigation in the
Wildland Urban Interface

Visit our website at firesafemt.org, or contact FireSafe Montana at
execdir@firesafemt.org or (406) 431-8718

Remember

Much of the work in the Home Ignition Zone is inexpensive. Most homeowners can do this work themselves. Start with the home first and take it one step at a time so you don't get overwhelmed. Doing these few things will give your home a much better chance of surviving a wildland fire. The chances are that the wildland fire will stay on the ground, thus leaving most of your large trees unharmed by fire.

Home Ignition Zone work will keep our Firefighters safer when they are protecting your home from Wildfire. Thank you.

