

Annual Meeting for Vista del Cerro Firewise Committee Report

I recently attended the Home Ignition Zone Assessment Course put on by the AZ Dept of Forestry and Fire Management. It changed the way I look at being firewise. So, I wanted to share what I learned with the other homeowners in Vista del Cerro.

The trainer's biggest point of the day was "We aren't risking personnel or resources on something that is already lost." In other words, if a homeowner or community has not done what could be done to protect their property, then it will likely be a lost cause in them trying to save it.

The destruction from wildfires depends on the weather, the topography, and the fuels available to them. We cannot control the weather or our topography, which is high risk. But we do have some control over the fuels. Probably the biggest risk we have that we can control is a fire within a few miles of VDC and the wind carrying embers into our neighborhood or nearby neighborhoods.

If a wildfire does come thru VDC, it doesn't mean the homes have to burn down. Thus, your first concern should be the 5 foot ignition zone around your house, included attached structures such as decks. How ignitable is your home? If it can't ignite, it can't burn. It is critical that you remove everything that is ignitable within that 5 foot zone. These are the things you can do to clean up this zone:

1. Clean your roof, gutters and foundation of all pine needles, leaves, and debris. Embers can easily ignite these fuels. Repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent penetration by embers. Do this regularly, not just a couple of times a year.
2. Have nothing flammable near the house. Do not stack wood, use wood chip mulch, etc. within the 5 foot zone. Do not store anything under your deck. Consider screening in the decks with wire mesh.
3. If you have patio furniture with cushions, do not leave them on your deck, especially if there is a wildfire going on in the area.
4. If you have trees within this zone, be sure they are healthy and watered regularly.
5. Check your foundations, walls, eaves, etc. for cracks and places embers could blow into. Seal these cracks.
6. Replace any broken siding or windows to prevent embers from entering.
7. If you have attic vents, make sure these are covered with 1/8" wire mesh to prevent embers from entering your attic.
8. Use low flammable plants in your landscaping.

The next thing you can do is to reduce the fuels near your house. This includes reducing the density of plants and shrubs, removing ladder fuels (5-6 feet of trees), removing dead trees,

branches and bushes, and making sure any trees are healthy. Thin trees so their crowns are not touching.

I will be giving Dave some things to add to the VDC website. This will include a list of websites that you can access for more information about things related to wildland fires – including the Red Alert System, understanding the wildfire threat, and the Yavapai County Communities Wildfire Protection Plan, and the Prescott Fire Department chipping program. I will also have a list of contractors who do fuels mitigation that you can contact for quotes. This list is not a recommendation, only information.

We may see more grants come our way in the next year. The Governor has authorized a large increase in funding for fuels mitigation in Arizona. If you lot has never received Federal grant monies, it is still eligible for the 90/10 grants. They will be having another application in the next week or two, so let me know if you are interested.

If you are having any problems with securing insurance coverage, please let me know. The State is working with NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) to ensure the insurance companies don't just cancel coverage for people in high risk areas.

I have Title III monies available as follows - \$500 each:

Submitting invoices for work already completed – Lots 19, 25/26 and 55. For additional requests – Lots 9/10, 24/25, 31 and 59.

Working on 90/10 grants for Lots 58, 30, and 44.

The Wildfire Expo is Saturday, April 23, on the courthouse square.

If you would like an Ignition Zone Assessment, please contact me.

Donna Fagan

Vista del Cerro Firewise Committee