

Big Mountain Fire District Fire Wise and Fire Safe

April 2024

Facing the possibility of losing a home to wildfire can be daunting, but as homeowners we can take proactive measures to significantly reduce the risk of wildfire damage to our homes. It's called "Home Hardening," it involves creating survivable space, choosing fire resistant materials, and making critical adjustments to our homes to protect them against wildfire.

Step one is to **assess your home** and determine where your house is most vulnerable. Start at the top with the roof and work your way down. Look for broken roof tiles or shingles, cracks, or gaps. Check eaves and gutters. Look for areas that could allow access to embers. Where can a fire take hold?

During a wildfire, homes can be threatened by 1). wind-blown embers, 2). radiant heat, and 3). direct flame contact.

Direct flame contact occurs when the fire's flame contacts a structure igniting and spreading rapidly.

Radiant heat refers to heat given off by the fire. If a structure is within the radiant heat zone, the intense heat can ignite combustible materials on the home's exterior such as wood and vinyl siding.

Embers are small burning fragments of material that can be carried long distances by the wind. They can land on roofs, vegetation, and other vulnerable areas around your home. They can also enter homes through vents and open windows and can become lodged in open spaces like roofs and gutters. In wildfire events, 60-90% of homes lost are due to embers.

It's not too early for us to shift our focus to the upcoming wildfire season. We begin with **Step 1: Assessing your home**. If you would like assistance with your assessment, contact the Big Mountain Fire Station 406-862-3748. They can assist or put you in contact with someone who can. **Step 2: Take action** and harden your home. "**Home Hardening**" is making your home more resistant to wildfire by choosing fire resistant materials and implementing various fire preventative measures. The goal is to create survivable space around your home and to minimize the risk of ignition from wind-blown embers. Below is a list of ways that you can begin hardening your home.

Home Hardening Checklist:

- **Remove** dead leaves, pine needles, and other flammable materials from the roof, gutters, and in between deck board joints to help prevent embers from igniting your home.
- **Inspect** shingles or roof tiles. **Replace** or **repair** any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- **Screen** areas below decks and porches with 1/8" metal mesh screening to prevent the accumulation of debris and combustible materials.
- **Clean** debris from exterior attic vents. **Cover** with 1/8" metal screening to help prevent sparks from entering your home.
- **Install** 1/8" metal mesh screening on vents in the eaves to help prevent ember entry.
- **Repair** or **replace** damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows.
- **Move** anything flammable away from wall exteriors, including mulch, flammable plants, leaves and pine needles, and firewood piles.
- **Remove** anything stored underneath decks or porches.

Remember to recheck your insurance policy. Create a home inventory. Purchase fire extinguishers and teach everyone in your household how to use them correctly. Know the location of shutoffs for gas and electricity. Create a wildfire action plan.

Our annual Community Brush Collection Day is June 15th. Volunteers are welcome and appreciated. More information will be coming your way next month. Also, start making plans to attend our 2024 Big Mountain Firewise Community Picnic in July.

Prevention is the key to improving your homes chances of surviving a wildfire. It begins with you!

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