

Big Mountain Fire District Fire Wise and Fire Safe

April 2023

Spring brings the perfect opportunity to prepare our homes and property for the summer wildfire season. Montana possesses all the necessary characteristics to support large, uncontrollable wildfires. We live in a beautiful community that thus far has been fortunate in the absence of wildfire, but how do we continue to stave off fire? We, as homeowners, can play an integral role in continuing this trend by creating survivable/defensible space on our property and in our community.

Defensible space is a term used to describe the opportunity for greater structural protection by firefighters. This term has evolved into a more proactive idea known as **survivable space**. “Survivable space is the modification of landscape design, fuels, and building materials that make a home ignition caused by wildfire unlikely, even without direct firefighter intervention” (*Firesafemt.org*). Creating survivable space is a way for us, as homeowners, to be proactive in protecting our little piece of Montana.

Survivable space involves creating a series of management zones, or the Home Ignition Zone, which refers to the house itself and the surrounding 30-200 Feet. **The Home Ignition Zone** is comprised of four zones.

- Zone 1- Intensive Fuel Reduction Zone, includes the house and the surrounding 30ft.
- Zone 2-the Moderate Fuel Reduction Zone, is 30-100 feet around the structure.
- Zone 3- the Managed Wildland Zone, is the area 100-200 ft from the home.
- Zone 4- the Community Ignition Zone. May be comprised of private and public land.

The distances for these zones are based on the steepness of slope and the vegetation type around your property. The link below, *Homeowners' Firesafe Guide for Montana* provides an extensive explanation of each zone and the measures you can take to develop a survivable space. <https://firesafemt.org/img/LivingwFireFSM20091.pdf> (refer to pages 5-10) The fire prevention requirements are the same for lot owners without a structure on their property.

Now is the time to start creating your survivable space. A list of things that you can do is attached. Our **annual brush collection day will be June 3, 2023**. Start cleaning up your property by trimming lower tree branches and removing the leaves, tree needles and pinecones from around the base of larger trees.

We can play a role in improving Montana's wildfire situation by creating a community that can survive a wildfire with survivable space!

If you need assistance assessing what needs to be done on your property, call BMFD 406-862-3748 to set up an appointment.

Your BMFD Firewise Board:

Ben Devall, Fire Chief
Robert Sharp, BMFD Firefighter
Paul Silverman, BMFD Board Rep
Josh Witt, WMR Rep
Woody Hust, Community Rep, Sub 1

Sue Oemichen, Resident Leader, Sunrise Ridge
Marylou Patterson, Community Rep Sub 2
Diana Tague, Community Rep, Northern Lights
Suzanne Burrow, Community Rep, Wood Run

Improve Your Homes Survivability

- **Rake** up leaves, pine needles, and other debris within 5 to 30 feet of your home, and from the base of large trees.
- **Prune** tree limbs so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet above the ground. Trim back shrubs and overhanging branches that come closer than 5 feet of the house.
- **Remove** dead trees, fallen limbs, dead vegetation, and other flammable material.
- **Move** construction material, trash, and woodpiles at least 30 feet away from the house.
- **Dispose** of weeds, leaves, pine needles, and grass clippings.
- **Clear** flammable debris from your rooflines, gutters, decks, porches, and patios.
- **Contact** your neighbor if the recommended survivable space goes beyond your property boundaries. Do not work on someone else's property.
- **Participate in the BMFD Firewise Annual Brush Collection Day, Saturday, June 3, 2023, 9 am-4 pm.**

Please:

- **Cut** branches, tree limbs, and small logs to a maximum of 6 feet long and 6 inches in diameter.
- **Stack** your debris curbside no later than Friday, June 2 for collection the following day.
- **Volunteer** to assist in the collection/disposal effort, especially those with a pickup truck or flatbed trailer. Please call or text coordinator **Paul Silverman at 406-249-8969** if you're available to help, or if you have any questions. Volunteers should meet at the Big Mountain firehouse at 9 am on June 3rd. Thank you for participating!