



# BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART



BIGHORN BASIN FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

## ISSUE #19 — SUMMER 2015

**ATTENTION BIG HORN COUNTY READERS**  
 Due to exhaustion of Big Horn County Firewise funding, this is the last hard copy of Bighorn Basin Firesmart that you will receive. E-mail copies will continue. So, if you have been getting a paper copy, and would like to get the E-mail version, please make an E-mail request to [Firewise@wytfs.com](mailto:Firewise@wytfs.com).

### RED FLAG WARNINGS

Based on an article in the June 2015 NFPA Fire Break Wildland Fire newsletter.

With the safety of residents and firefighters foremost, one of the products that the [National Weather Service, \(NWS\)](#) provides to improve firefighter safety is the **Red Flag Warning**. But just what is a Red Flag Warning?

Red Flag Warnings begin as a **Fire Weather Watch**, which means that weather conditions are predicted to occur that will support rapid wildfire growth and rates of spread 24 to 72 hours from when the watch is issued. *When the conditions are predicted to occur within 24 hours or are already happening, a **Red Flag Warning** is issued.*

The conditions that trigger Red Flag Warnings include predicted weather conditions of high temperatures, sustained high surface winds, and low relative humidity (dry air), plus predicted and observed low fuel moistures (dry vegetation – live and dead), and anticipated lightning activity. It is usually not any one condition, but the combination of these factors, that cause **Red Flag Warnings** to be issued.

While the primary purpose of Red Flag Warnings is firefighter safety, fire agencies and land management agencies also use them for pre-planning, staffing level changes, and if necessary, to restrict some public activities such as campfires and agricultural and forestry prescribed burns.

- So, how are Red Flag Warnings communicated to the public?
- ⇒ Included as part of local radio and television weather broadcasts.
  - ⇒ Broadcast on the Weather Alert radio network.
  - ⇒ Mapped on the detailed website mentioned below.

Some Western U.S. locations, outside the basin, display red flags near public buildings. Here are examples of Red Flag Warning flags used. Some use a plain red flag—Others have custom-made



The Red Flag Warnings for the country are updated daily, and are mapped at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ridge2/fire/briefing.php>

<u>In this issue</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Special points of interest</u>
Red Flag Warnings	1	* What they mean
Firewise Coordinators	2	* And Firewise websites
Fire season & forest pest updates	3	* 2015 Firewise Picnic report
Make your driveway Firewise	4	* How to do it
Little Things that Matter	4	* Important little Firewise items
Old Maid Gulch project report	6	* The color version of the report
Proper equipment operation	7	* How to do it in a Firewise manner
More Little Things that Matter	8	* Bighorn Basin Firewise Facebook

**THE BIG HORN BASIN FIREWISE COORDINATORS ARE:**

**Big Horn County:** The County Fire Warden is Brent Godfrey (307) 568-2324. The Firewise Coordinator is Chris Weydeveld, [cweydeveld@wyffs.com](mailto:cweydeveld@wyffs.com), Technical Forestry Services, LLC, 6628 W. Riverside Dr. Casper, Wyoming 82604, or (307) 333-1098 (office), (307) 272-9533 (mobile).

**Washakie County:** Chris Kocher, Fire Warden, [ckocher@worlandfire.org](mailto:ckocher@worlandfire.org), P.O. Box 504, Worland, Wyoming 82401, or (307) 347-6379. The Firewise Coordinator is Chris Weydeveld, [cweydeveld@wyffs.com](mailto:cweydeveld@wyffs.com), Technical Forestry Services, LLC, 6628 W. Riverside Dr. Casper, Wyoming 82604, or (307) 333-1098 (office), (307) 272-9533 (mobile).

**Hot Springs County:** No Firewise Coordinator has yet been selected. Contact Jay Duvall, County Fire Warden, at (307) 921-1485, or [hscdwarden@gmail.com](mailto:hscdwarden@gmail.com)

**Park County :** Bernie Spanogle, Firewise Coordinator, can be reached at [pcfirerwise@gmail.com](mailto:pcfirerwise@gmail.com). or at 307-250-9387. The County Fire Warden is Russ Wenke, [rwenke@parkcounty.us](mailto:rwenke@parkcounty.us), 1131 11th Street, Cody, Wyoming 82414, or (307) 527-8551.

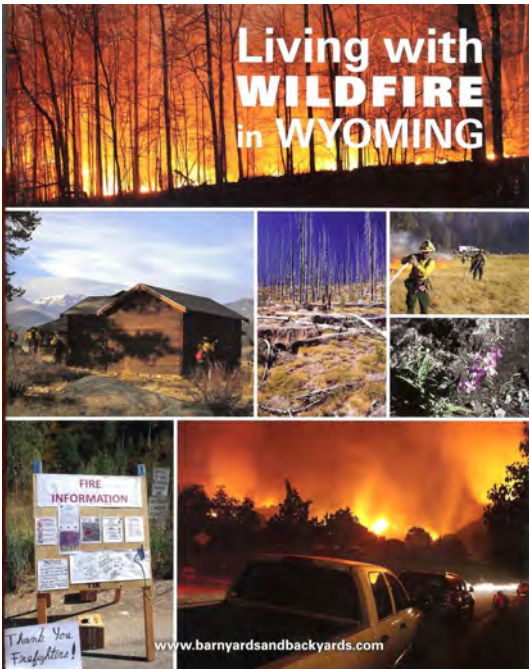
**The basin Firewise website :** [Pcfirewise.com](http://Pcfirewise.com) - Contact Park County Firewise. When you get there, click on "Park County Firewise" to get the menu. Check it out.


If you have general or specific questions about Firewise, two good online sources of answers are: [www.firewisewyoming.com](http://www.firewisewyoming.com) and [www.livingwithfire.com](http://www.livingwithfire.com).

Do you have topics you would like included in future newsletters? Please submit your suggestions and comments to [firewise@wyffs.com](mailto:firewise@wyffs.com), or by mail to G. Wynn, 824 Country Club, Casper, Wyoming 82609.

Thanks for providing this newsletter go to the Wyoming State Forestry Division, the Big Horn and Washakie County Fire Wardens, and the U.S. Forest Service. They provide the funding.

This newsletter is provided as a service of your county's Firewise Coordinator. If you choose not to receive future issues, please respond to [firewise@wyffs.com](mailto:firewise@wyffs.com), or to Big Horn/Washakie Firewise (6628 W. Riverside Drive, Casper, Wyoming 82604) by mail.



**Living with WILDFIRE in WYOMING** was prepared by the group of participants whose logos are shown below, and *Barnyards and Backyards*, with the cooperation of the USDA Forest Service. Inside are a wide variety of articles on planning for wildfires, avoiding wildfire destruction, and rehabilitation following fires. The publication is available from these folks,  or by a computer search of the title.



## A REVISED 2015 WILDFIRE SEASON PREDICTION FOR WYOMING

According to the “National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook” released by the National Interagency Fire Center, the 2015 wildfire season in Wyoming will be “NORMAL,” NOT what sources were predicting in the previous newsletter. That was before our wet spring. Just remember that “NORMAL” still has wildfires in the mountains, on the prairies, along the rivers, and in subdivisions in the basin. ***DON'T DROP YOUR GUARD!***

### FOREST PEST UPDATE

Annual aerial detection flights indicate that mountain pine beetle activity has declined in the Bighorns since peak activity in 2008 & 2009. This reduction is due to a combination of natural factors:

- ◇ Beetles have killed thousands of the most susceptible trees. That has reduced tree density and overcrowding.
- ◇ A few days of sub-zero temperatures, and long winters with deep snow, have killed many of the overwintering beetle larva.
- ◇ Normal beetle population cycles.

Tree thinning to reduce stocking of lodgepole pine has contributed to localized improvements, but the Bighorns still have several hundred thousand overstocked acres.

Douglas-fir and spruce beetle populations have been at endemic (low density) levels in recent years, and are not presently a general concern to foresters and landowners.

Even with continued tree thinning, another round of beetle-caused mortality in all conifer tree species can be expected in a few years when beetle populations follow normal cyclic patterns.

### *THE 2015 MOUNTAIN CABIN-OWNERS FIREWISE PICNIC*

The June 28 Firewise picnic at Willow Park was a good one. The weather cooperated, and the caterer reported feeding steaks to more than fifty. The Bighorn National Forest was represented by Chris Thomas, Jason Rodrigues, and Brian Boden, the new Powder River District Resource Specialist for the mountain cabins. These three men updated the fuels treatment work in the south end of the Bighorns, and fielded numerous questions concerning the cabin lot leasing program.

### A NEW PRODUCT ENCOUNTERED IN A NEW CABIN IN CANYON CREEK COUNTRY

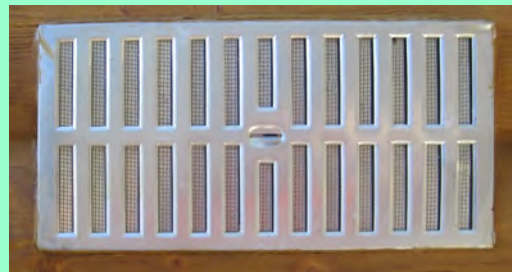
**FIREWISE RECOMMENDS THAT CRAWL SPACE AND ATTIC VENTS HAVE MESH NO LARGER THAN 1/8 INCH TO KEEP OUT FLYING EMBERS. THIS DEVICE HAS**

**SCREENED VENT HOLES, BUT CAN BE EASILY CLOSED DURING FIRE SEASON, OR FOR THE WINTER.**



Vent open

Vent closed



## Driveway fuel break

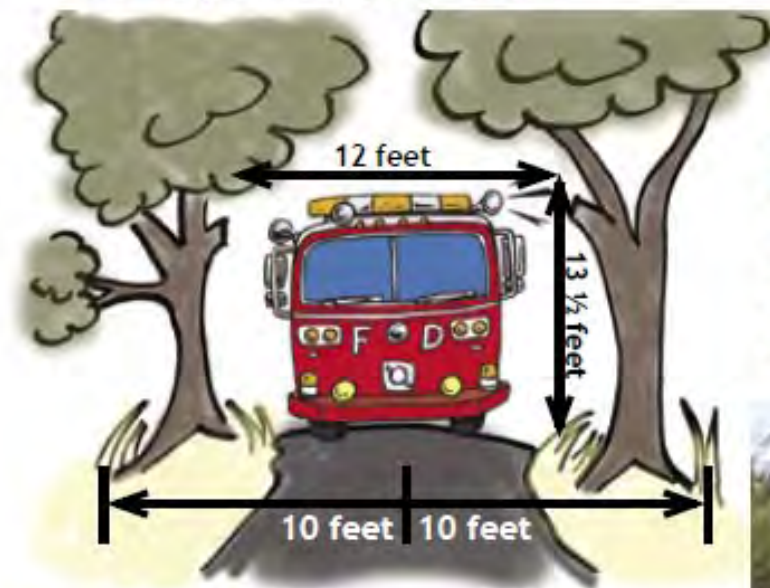
The driveway fuel break is intended to create clearance for a fire truck, as well as to slow the rate of spread and intensity of a wildland fire. It also is where fire suppression may more safely occur.

The clearance space in the driving area must meet these specifications:

- the horizontal clearance must be at least 12 feet
- the vertical clearance must be at least 13 ½ feet

The fuel break can be natural or man-made and must have these characteristics:

- the fuel break must extend 10 feet from each side of the driveway's centerline, creating an area that is at least 20 feet wide, including the driving surface
- the ground cover must be substantially nonflammable, as detailed in the section about the primary fuel break on page 8
- healthy trees and shrubs must be thinned and pruned to minimize a wildfire's spread
- the plants must be substantially free of dead material



A properly developed driveway fuel break has plenty of horizontal and vertical clearance.



Before



Standards for driveways apply to driveways longer than

150 feet. If you have a long driveway, you'll need to make sure a fire truck can fit beneath limbs and

between trees and shrubs, and

create a roadside fuel break so firefighters will have a safe place in which to set up and work.



After

OR

The above illustration was provided by the Oregon Department of Forestry. Their Firewise program has created several illustrations that are appropriate for the Firewise program in our area, and has given permission to use them for Bighorn Basin Firesmart.

### ANOTHER PAGE OF "LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER"

Most of these little things that matter have been in previous newsletters. They are in this issue to refresh your memory, and introduce them to new readers.



Flammables on a wooden deck



Two Firewise ideas for kindling: closed metal boxes and cans



Open window wells. Should be kept clear of leaves and forest litter, or covered.



Unsealed rough logs in contact with forest litter, AND with ember trap bark attached. Remove bark, seal the logs & crevices, and keep a three-foot swath cleared to bare mineral soil.



Dry forest litter and "special" dry wood by cabin wall and single-paned window.



Wooden construction items near propane tank and building walls

## OLD MAID GULCH HAZARDOUS FUELS TREATMENT

*This is the Old Maid Gulch report from last issue, in color. It gives a better view of what was accomplished.*

The 6.5 acre Old Maid Gulch Fuels Treatment project inside the Canyon Creek Village subdivision was recently completed. Project work included thinning a juniper stand to 15 foot spacing (25 feet on slopes) to reduce potential wildfire intensity and rate of spread. In the process, trees were pruned, shrubs were cut, and the cut shrubs and thinning and pruning slash were piled and burned. This \$8,000 project was paid for with \$4,000 of Washakie County Firewise cost-share funds, and \$4,000 of Homeowner's Association funds and in-kind contribution.



**BEFORE FUELS TREATMENT**



**SAME LOCATION AFTER TREATMENT**



**AFTER TREATMENT COMPARISON. THE FOREGROUND WAS TREATED, THE BACKGROUND WASN'T.**



**AFTER TREATMENT NEAR HOMES**

## USING POWER EQUIPMENT THE RIGHT (FIREWISE) WAY

A consolidation of Firewise tips from several sources, plus “common sense.”

When working to keep our homes and properties safer in the event of a wildfire, it is very important to **act** carefully, and take precautions not to be the cause of a wildfire while trying to do the right thing. **Operating equipment like chain saws, lawnmowers, ATVs, and tractors improperly can cause sparks that could ignite a wildfire.** We all need to act with care. Over 1,600 wildfires are caused each year in California alone, using equipment the wrong way!

Here are some important tractor use and mowing tips:

1. Mow during the cool time of day generally while there is still dew on the ground, not during the heat of the day, and not when the wind is blowing.
2. Lawn mowers are for mowing lawns. Use a weed trimmer when cutting dry grass.
3. Don't top off fuel tanks. Fuel spillage on hot internal combustion engines can ignite.
4. Spark arresters are required on all portable gasoline engines used in wildland areas.
5. Make sure spark arresters are in proper working order, and there is no carbon build up.
6. Keep a full-sized shovel and water source or fire extinguisher close by at all times.
7. When transporting tractors, mowers, and recreational vehicles, make sure that chains on the trailers are not hitting the pavement as you are driving. That could throw sparks.
8. Take special care when using mowers and tractors in dry grass that can easily ignite.
9. Keep the undercarriage and orifices of all equipment clear of grass and other flammables.
10. Remove rocks and metal from the yard that could be hit by the mower and cause sparks.
11. Be aware of, and observe wildland equipment use restrictions imposed by county, state, or federal fire officials.
12. Don't pull off into dry grass with tractors, ATVs, or motorcycles.
13. Use only the recommended grade of fuel.
- 14. Stop often to recheck your surroundings and the weather.**
15. Keep a cell phone with you and dial 911 in the event of an emergency.



The US Forest Service (with their One Less Spark One Less Wildfire Campaign) created a YouTube video that reinforces how you can be more careful as you act responsibly this year

### ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION OFFERS TREE IDENTIFICATION BOOK

For a \$5 donation to the Arbor Day Foundation, you can get a pocket book that tells you “**What Tree is That?**” You can use this to identify different trees by their distinct characteristics. To obtain the full-color guide, send your name, address, and \$5 to *What Tree Is That?*, Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Ave., Nebraska City, NE 68410, or online at [arborday.org](http://arborday.org).

### WEBSITES FOR TRACKING WILDFIRE ACTIVITY

FOR FIRES IN WYOMING:

<http://lands.state.wy.us>

Then click on - Forestry : Wildland Fire Management,  
and then Fire Information

FIRE ACTIVITY FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY:

[www.inciweb.org](http://www.inciweb.org)

*Big Horn/Washakie Firewise*  
*6628 W. Riverside Drive*  
*Casper, Wyoming 82604*



**MORE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER**



**FIREWOOD PILED RIGHT BY WOODEN BUILDING WALL**



**Propane tank is a cleared spot, but with an old wooden ladder leaning against it.**

You can now keep up on daily news and events with Bighorn Basin Firewise. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/bighornbasin.firewise>