



FIREWISE AND THE 2015 FIRE SEASON

Once again, hundreds of rural homes, Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) subdivisions, and seasonal-use cabins were destroyed by wildfires, despite the best efforts of the thousands of firefighters working to save them. This year the destruction was mostly in Oregon, Washington, and California. Fortunately, only about a dozen Wyoming homes and cabins were included in the 2015 toll.

Whether blame is given to expansion of homes into the wildland, drought conditions, U.S. firefighting troops & equipment all being committed, or climate change, the fact remains that all WUI subdivisions and individual homes are at risk, as are many urban homes.

While there is no 100% methodology to protect a home or cabin from a threatening wildfire, application of Firewise principles to structure design, construction materials, and homeowner actions in the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) can all substantially increase the likelihood that a WUI home/cabin can survive wildfire, or be safely protected by firefighting forces.

The reasons individual homes and cabins burned are numerous. Without looking at specific cases, they included:

- A lack of safe access for firefighters
- Neglect in maintaining Firewise conditions of individual WUI homes and cabins, including the Little Things That Matter mentioned in all Bighorn Basin Firesmart newsletters.
- Building construction deficiencies. Examples: shake roofs, unskirted decks, and unscreened foundation & eave vents [See pages 2 and 3].
- Lack of local zoning and construction standards that would increase the resistance of WUI homes to wildfire.

During one week in August, the cost of wildfire suppression in the U.S. was a record \$243 million dollars. The report didn't separate home and cabin protection expenses from that total, but it was a substantial percentage during the August and September wildfires in the west.

For 2015, the Forest Service earmarked 52% of their total budget for fighting fires. As a comparison, that was 16% in 1995! And it's not just the Forest Service and other federal firefighting agencies that have been impacted. Local city, state, and county fire district budgets have also been strained by expansion of housing communities and suburbs into the wildland. A recent Forest Service mapping project states that almost one-third of all homes in the U.S. are now within a WUI where housing and vegetation are intermingled!

To stretch Firewise funding, If you choose not to receive future issues of this newsletter, or receive it by E-mail, please respond to firewise@wytfs.com, or to Washakie Firewise (6628 W. Riverside Drive, Casper, Wyoming 82604) by mail.

BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART

BIGHORN BASIN FIREWISE COMMUNITIES



<u>In this issue</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Special points of interest</u>
The 2015 Fire season	1	* General
Firewise Coordinators	2	* And Firewise websites
Firewise and eaves	3	* The bad and the good
Under deck flammables	4	* Does & Don'ts
Before & After thinning	5	* Canyon Creek Country Work Day
One Firewise tool	6	* A vacuum cleaner
Firewise quiz	7	* Just a quick test
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 position is vacant.

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

Hot Springs County: Contact Dion Robbins, County Fire Warden, at (307) 431-2767 or hscwarden@rtconnect.net The Firewise Coordinator position is vacant.

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

The basin Firewise website : Pcfirerwise.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 and www.livingwithfire.com.

Do you have topics you would like included in future newsletters? Please submit your suggestions and comments to firewise@wytfs.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 your County's Fire Warden, 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, or get your newsletter by E-mail, please respond to firewise@wytfs.com, or to Washakie Firewise (6628 W. Riverside Drive, Casper, Wyoming 82604) by mail.




AN UPDATE: The new Ten Sleep Fire Hall construction was recently completed. It is reported as looking nice, and housing the fire trucks obtained by Washakie County to replace those burned in last year's fire.



© 2007 Vinyl Wall Art

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE EAVE SCREENS MENTIONED ON PAGE 3? In November there was a grass fire *inside* Casper. The flames ignited a weathered board fence, which set the adjacent garage on fire. Embers from the burning garage entered inadequately screened eave and attic vents of the nearby house. The town's firefighters saved the house, but flames burned part of the ceiling, and electrical wiring in the attic. The residents were forced to move out until repairs were completed.



Several Firewise principles were in play to create this situation, besides the lack of proper vent screens. These were primarily the weathered wooden fence and tree in close proximity to the walls and eaves of the garage.

FIRESMART AND EAVES

Embers entering eave vents and unscreened openings in the eaves can ignite materials inside the home or cabin. Fire may smolder in the area above the eaves, without visible smoke or flames for several days after the fire has passed, and burn the building from the inside out. Bird nests and flammable items stored under the eaves can ignite and do the same thing.

A few prevention measures can be taken to reduce or eliminate these entry points for flying embers.

- ◇ Eave vents should be covered with metal screens with mesh no larger than 1/8 inch. Closable vents (See Firesmart #19) are also an option.
- ◇ Eave screens should be kept clean to keep them free of debris.
- ◇ If vent screen mesh is wider than the 1/8" maximum, and can't be upgraded, metal or coated wooden covers can be prepared and installed prior to evacuating during a wildfire.
- ◇ Gaps between the wall and eaves should be tightly filled with appropriate filler. This should also be done around any outside chimneys.
- ◇ Keep walls and eaves clear of bird nests and the paper nests made by wasps.



Please read the short report at the bottom of Page Two to find out just how important this page can be in saving your home or cabin.



AN EXAMPLE OF CAREFULLY SEALED EAVES & CHIMNEY



A SCREENED GABLE VENT



A robin's nest of tinder under a cabin eaves



Broken under-eave boards would allow entry of embers



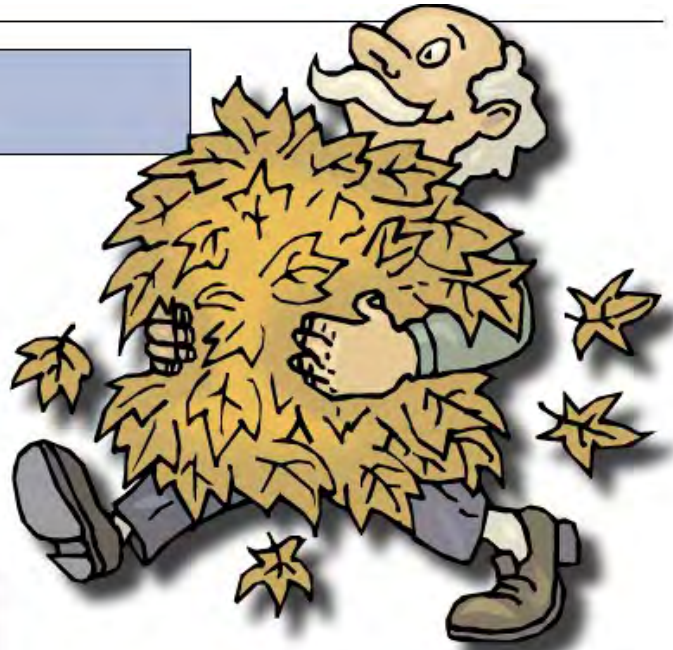
Eave openings permanently covered with thin metal (a license plate), with sealed seams

Under-deck flammables

A burning wooden deck or stairway may catch the rest of the house on fire. The best way to keep that from happening is to clean flammable material out from beneath exterior wooden decks and stairways.

Firewood and lumber need to be removed. Dry needles, leaves and other litter needs to be raked out and removed.

Keeping the space under wooden decks and stairways clean — and enclosed — is one of the best ways to keep a house safe during fire season. *



A wildfire often starts in dry leaves, needles or grass, which may quickly spread to heavier fuels, such as firewood and lumber stored beneath a deck.



A forest fire like this one (right) can send tons of glowing debris skyward. If your property is downwind of an inferno like this, expect lots of hot stuff to land in your yard and on your roof, and to drift under your deck.



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.

CANYON CREEK COUNTRY FIREWISE 2015 WORK DAY

As an integral part of their status as an officially-recognized Firewise Community, Washakie County's Canyon Creek Country subdivision did a two-day Firewise Work Day in early August, during which dozens of residents contributed their labor to:

- ◇ Removing hazardous fuels residual to fuelbreak construction around homes.
- ◇ Reducing brush along access roads, and in meadows adjacent to housing
- ◇ Maintaining access roadways for fire apparatus
- ◇ Performing maintenance on the subdivision's fire engine water fill stations

Washakie County Firewise attended one day of the project to complete requested Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMP) for individual homes, and conduct walk-around Firewise inspections with homeowners with approved WMP.

Residents also participated in training on how to operate all of the fire trucks stationed in the subdivision by the Ten Sleep Fire District.



BELOW IS AN EXAMPLE *BEFORE* AND *AFTER* LOT DRAWING OF SOME FIREWISE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT AROUND A HOME OR CABIN. THIS SHOWS THAT BEING FIREWISE DOESN'T REQUIRE THAT YOU CLEAR-CUT YOUR LOT TO BE FIREWISE.



A FIREWISE TOOL YOU MAY NOT HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT

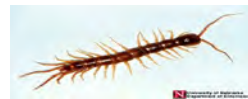
Once you have done the big jobs to make your home place or cabin Firewise, there will always be a few of the nagging Little Things that Matter left to do at least every spring. Consider breaking out and energizing your workshop or yard vacuum cleaner to make some of these little jobs easier. Suggested applications:

- ⇒ Removing leaves and needles from rock and cinder mulch around the outside walls of your buildings.
- ⇒ Cleaning forest and yard litter out of the cracks between the boards in your deck.
- ⇒ Sucking the leaves and forest litter out of window wells.
- ⇒ Cleaning attic and crawlspace screens.
- ⇒ To assist in cleaning gutters.

And you will likely find other applications.

The example used for the illustrated applications was a small electric unit normally used for noisy cleanup indoors in the garage, basement, etc. There are larger gas-powered and electric units for yard work, and these may be suitable for some of the jobs mentioned above.

While this can give you a cleaner job than just using a rake, there is no magic with this method, and you will still be spending time on your knees. Gloves are needed, as leaves and rocks can clog the intake, and stinging and biting bugs, and other nasty stuff, lives in the leaves you are sucking up.



FIREWISE QUIZ FOR AROUND YOUR HOME OR CABIN

1. What are the safety benefits of keeping your lawn well-hydrated and maintained?

- A Reduces wildfire intensity
- B Creates less fuel for a wildfire
- C Makes it easier to mow
- D A and B

2. What material is best used to enclose under-eaves and soffit vents to prevent embers from entering the home?

- A Metal mesh no larger than 1/8 inch
- B Metal plates
- C Metal mesh no larger than 1/4 inch
- D Aluminum foil sheets

3. What flammable material should be moved 30 feet away from your house or cabin?

- A Firewood stacks
- B Propane tanks
- C Overgrown shrubs
- D All of the above

4. Why it is important to prune tree branches 6 to 10 feet from the ground?

- A Less leaves and debris fall to the ground to be raked up
- B Prevents wildfire from spreading to tree tops
- C Prevents the tree from burning down
- D Keeps the limbs from falling on a house

5. What Firewise safety tip helps protect your home from Wildland fire?

- A Creating an emergency evacuation plan
- B Clearing leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches, and decks
- C Storing lawn furniture away on Red Flag Warning days
- D B and C

(This quiz is from the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program)

6. Ember or spark penetration to the home can happen through what means?

- A Window screens
- B Missing or loose shingles/ roof tiles
- C Open garage doors
- D All of the above

7. What plants are recommended for Firewise landscaping?

- A Seasonal flowering plants
- B Waxy short-leaved plants
- C Low growing low flammability plants
- D Tall weeds

8. What areas near the house should be clear of debris and other flammable materials?

- A Garage
- B Under decks and porches
- C Pool
- D Driveway

9. What kind of roofing is considered "Class A" for best fire resistance?

- A Asphalt shingles
- B Concrete tile
- C Metal
- D All of the above

10. What types of fuel breaks work well around a home's perimeter?

- A Gravel walkway
- B Driveway
- C Stone wall
- D All of the above



Answers:

1. = D 2. = A 3. = D 4. = B 5. = D
6. = D 7. = C 8. = B 9. = D 10. = D

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MORE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER



Winter-killed shrubbery near house.

← *Flammable shrubbery under house or cabin eaves*

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