

# FIREWISE RECOMENDATIONS for WILDFIRE-PREPAREDNESS

Information from the Texas Forest Service – Wildland-Urban Interface  
by Priscilla Stanley

**Do you have a blue reflective 911 address sign?** This helps all first-responders reach you quicker.

**Driveway access:** 12' wide x 12' high to accommodate fire trucks. Cedar trees and rock walls should **not** be close to the driveway.

**Firebreaks:** Driveway, rock walls, gravel paths and stone mulch are all helpful.

**Roof** - Fire-resistant or non-combustible roofing, **chimney & stove pipe with 10 -15 ft clearance from tree limbs**, tree branches away from roof.

**Roof peak vents, soffits, ridge vent & area under pier & beam home:** All attic openings & other home openings into **or under the home need hail screen (hardware cloth) and metal window screening** to keep out large & small firebrands which could cause ignition in the home.

**Chimney cap** with screening to arrest sparks. Damper should be closed when you are not using the fireplace.

**Gutters** should be clean, no leaves. Also remove leaves that collect against the home in fall.

**Defensible Space:** The amount of fuel should be reduced within **30 ft from home on level land. Weed-eat grass around home out 30 – 50 ft three times a year at 3 inches for native grasses** (shorter for turf grass).

**May – June** (cool season grasses cure)

**After hard freeze in Dec – Jan** (warm season grasses cure)

**Drought** (brown & crispy)

When grass is brown, cut it down.”

On steep slopes, cut grass further from home (*See Cedar recommendations below*)

## **Remove Ladder fuel:**

**Lift tree canopy 3 – 5 ft from ground OR** keep grass cut short & watered under the oaks

**Selectively thin cedar 30 - 50 ft from structure on level ground**

**or 75 – 100 ft from structure if cedar is downhill from your home**

**or 150 – 200 ft for a steep hill or canyon**

**Break continuity of cedar brakes away from home with shaded fuel breaks,** 25 – 30 ft wide between groups of cedar. Shaded fuel break can be meandering

## • **Wildfire radiant heat 66 ft away for 90 seconds can ignite wood**

Typically a wildland fire front passes over an area on your home **in 54 seconds**, unless it ignites large vegetation, a woodpile or other fuel near your home.

- **Firebrands fly 0.25 – 0.5 mile ahead of fire** (up to 1 mile for larger fires) & start fires if they land on combustible vegetation or other material.

**No wooden fencing attached to your home, garage or other buildings.** Replace an 8 to 10 ft section adjacent to the building with chain link, ranch wire or other metal fencing with metal posts to avoid carrying fire from the wooden fence to the home.

**Landscaping:** Have less fuel within 30 ft of home.

**Oaks & most deciduous trees are OK, if there is no “ladder fuel” beneath them.**

**Properly modified & maintained vegetation can slow the spread of wildfire.**

**Shorten the flame lengths:** Grass flame length = 2x grass height, & greater with wind.

With wind, grass fires can spread faster than a horse can run.

Owners & firefighters have died in grass fires because they underestimate the risk.

**Reduce the amount of heat on the home by reducing fuel in landscaping plants near the home.**

Firewise landscaping can be very attractive.

**Avoid flammable plants** near your home: *e.g.* cedar, pampas grass, rosemary, yaupon, agarita

**No resinous, oily, waxy or dead plant material near your home.**

Green perennials, cacti & succulents have **high water content & do not burn easily.**

**Open loose branching is better than dense foliage with more fuel.**

Use only low plants near windows

**Pier & beam homes, decks, porches & outbuildings: Enclose underneath with hardware cloth (hail screen) & metal window screen or with metal skirting to keep out leaves & large & small firebrands.** *Fire under the home or on decks or porches is the leading cause of home loss.*

**Outside furniture:** Take in cushions & other combustible material on porches & decks when you will be away for an extended period.

**Avoid straw doormats.** They have ignited wooden doors from firebrand ignition of the doormat.

**Propane tank:**

Place rocks under and at least 5 ft out from tank to suppress grass & weed growth,

**15 ft is better**

Codes usually require the tank to be 15 – 20 ft from structure, but **30 – 50 ft is better.**

Do **not** screen propane tanks with cedar, other vegetation or wooden fencing etc.

**Firewise landscapes are low maintenance landscapes.**

**Woodpile: Should be at least 30 ft from home & on same level**

If stored above home, burning logs can roll downhill toward your home.

If stored below home, fire & heat go upward toward your home.

**Firewood should be stacked at least 30 feet from anything you don't want to burn** (including your home, your trees and your propane tank).

If you have large amounts of firewood, make several piles in different open areas away from your home.

**Install a Fire fitting on your well water tank or rainwater catchment tank:** Check local fire department for the proper fire fitting.

**Lop re-growth cedar** on a regular basis.

To keep yourself motivated, remember:

1. The **Shepherd –Rees fire in Kerrville in Aug-Sept 2000 burned 1,250 acres (2 square miles) & burned for 10 days.**

2. **Fire moves uphill 16 times faster than on level ground** (because the fire preheats the vegetation in front of it).

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