



50 Ways

to Make your Woodland Home Firewise

This publication contains suggestions and recommendations based on professional judgment, experience, and research. It is intended to serve as a guide to help you protect your most valuable assets – your family and your home.





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Wildfires occur regularly in Alabama. Whether started by humans or by lightning, they are part of a natural cycle that helps to maintain the health of our forests.

Alabama is experiencing a movement of population from cities and towns into forestland and remote areas. Woodland homeowners must address the dangers that exist around them, particularly wildfire.



No Cost Actions Just A Little Time and Effort

- Perform a FIREWISE assessment of your home (pages 6 & 7 of the booklet): www.forestry.alabama.gov/WUI/Publications/WildfireRAGH.pdf or contact the Alabama Forestry Commission for a free consultation: www.forestry.alabama.gov/Fire_Risk_Request.aspx
- Clean your roof and gutters of leaves and pine needles (best when done in fall and spring).
- Clear the view of your house number so it can be easily seen from the street.
- Put a hose (at least 100' long) on a rack and attach it to an outside faucet.
- Trim all tree branches that overhang your house.
- Trim all tree branches from within 20' of chimneys.
- Move firewood pile out of your home's defensible space.
- Remove trees along the driveway to make it 12' wide.
- Prune branches that overhang the driveway to provide 14' overhead clearance.
- Maintain a green lawn for 30' around your home.
- Clear deadwood and dense flammable vegetation from your home's defensible space. Thin and prune trees; brush back; and remove ladder fuels.
- Consider replacing conifer shrubs from your home's defensible space, especially if your home is in a high-risk area.
- If new homes are still being built in your area, talk to the developer and local zoning officials about building standards.
- Plan and discuss an escape plan with your family. Have a practice drill. Include your pets.
- Get involved with your community's wildfire protection plans and disaster mitigation plans.
- Check your fire extinguishers. Are they still charged? Are they easy to get to in an emergency? Does everyone in the family know where they are and how to use them?
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy for adequate coverage. Consult your insurance agent about costs of rebuilding and repairs in your area.
- Talk to children about not starting fires or playing with matches.
- If you have a burn barrel that you use for burning trash, obey local ordinances.
- Compost leaves in the fall, instead of burning them.
- If you burn brush piles or grass, clear a 25' barrier and get a burning permit. Find the number to call on the inside front cover of the telephone book.
- Have a shovel on hand and hook up the garden hose before you start the fire.
- Never burn if the smoke and flames are blowing towards your home (or your neighbor's home).
- Become a Firewise advocate. www.firewise.org
- Be safe when using sharp tools and ladders; use the buddy system or have someone looking out for you. If uncertain about your "Do-It-Yourself" skills, hire a service provider. www.forestry.alabama.gov/serviceproviders.aspx

Minimal Cost Actions

\$10 - \$25 and a little time

- Install highly visible house numbers (at least 4" tall) on your home.
- Install big, highly visible house numbers (at least 4" tall) at the entrance of the driveway onto the street. Use non-flammable materials and posts.
- Install metal screens on all attic, foundation, and other openings on your home to prevent accumulation of leaves and needles.
- Hold a neighborhood meeting to talk about fire safety; invite your local fire chief.
- Install a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and the garage.
- Install a metal shield between your home and an attached wood fence.
- Replace conifer and evergreen shrubs with low-flammable plants in your home's defensible space.
- Thin and prune conifer trees for 30' to 100' around your home.
- Purchase and use a NOAA weather alert radio. Many types of emergencies are announced through this service.
- Install a spark arrestor or heavy wire screen with opening less than 1/2" on wood burning fireplaces and chimneys.



*If uncertain about your "Do-It-Yourself" skills, hire a service provider.
www.forestry.alabama.gov/ServiceProviders.aspx*

Moderate Cost Actions

\$50 - \$250 and a little more work

- Replace vinyl gutters and downspouts with non-flammable, metal gutters and downspouts.
- Build a gravel turn-around area near your house big enough to allow a fire truck to turn around.
- Join your neighbors in having an additional access road into your neighborhood; share the costs.
- Treat flammable materials such as wood roofs, decks, and siding with fire retardant chemicals.
- Modify driveway gates to accommodate fire trucks. They should be at least 10' wide and set back at least 30' from the road. If locked, use a key box approved by your local fire department or use a chain loop with the lock that can be cut in an emergency.
- Enclose decks to prevent accumulation of leaves, needles, and debris. Include a metal screen with a 1/8" mesh opening to prevent sparks from getting under the deck.





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High Cost Actions (more than \$500)

- Replace your roof with fire-resistant materials such as Class A shingles.
- Install a roof irrigation system to protect your home's roof.
- Install an independent water supply for a sprinkler system with a non-electric (e.g., propane) powered pump capable of running unattended for 24 hours.
- Replace wood or vinyl siding with non-flammable material.
- Replace single-pane glass windows and plastic skylights with tempered, double-pane glass.
- Box in eaves, fascias, gable vents, and soffits with aluminum or steel materials with metal screens to prevent entry of sparks or firebrands.
- Improve driveway culverts and bridges to accommodate the weight of a fire truck.
- Relocate propane tanks a safe distance from your home. If inside the defensible space, make sure they are at least 10' from the house. Place a non-flammable ground cover such as gravel around them for 10'. Have electric service lines to your house placed underground.
- Improve your driveway by straightening sharp curves and filling in sharp dips that would hinder a fire truck. Provide sidetracks or pull-offs on long, narrow driveways.



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Make Firewise Fun!
Get your neighbors involved in Firewise Community projects and have a big party after the clean-up day.

Consider having a community firebreak around several homes and maintain it for recreation.

Work together with your neighbors and local fire service to have your community recognized as a Firewise Community USA.

For more information visit:
www.forestry.alabama.gov/WUI/homeowner_resources.aspx

Credits:
States of Minnesota, Tennessee, Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, and Georgia
NFPA/Firewise Communities USA (FWCUSA)
Southern Group of State Foresters – Fire Prevention/WUI Coordinators
The Centers for Urban and Interface Forestry