

READY, SET, GO!

YOUR PERSONAL WILDLAND FIRE ACTION GUIDE



4th Edition

READY, SET, GO!

Wildland Fire Action Guide

Saving Lives and Property
through Advance Planning



The fire season is now a year-round reality in many areas, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildland fire.

Each year, wildland fires consume hundreds of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Studies show that as many as 80 percent of the homes lost to wildland fires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices. In addition, wildland fire related deaths occur because people wait too long to leave their home.

Your fire department takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildland fire. However, the reality is that in a major wildland fire event, there will simply not be enough fire resources or firefighters to defend every home.

Successfully preparing for a wildland fire enables you to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property. In this Action Guide, we hope to provide the tips and tools you need to prepare for a wildland fire threat; have situational awareness when a fire starts; and to act early as directed by local officials.

The Ready, Set, Go! Program works in complimentary and collaborative fashion with the Firewise® Communities Program and other existing wildland fire public education efforts. Utilizing firefighters, it amplifies their messages to individuals to better achieve the common goal of wildland fire preparedness.



Fire-Adapted Communities (FAC) brings together the federal land management agencies with national organizations and state and local interests to stress that with proper community-wide preparation, human

populations and infrastructure can withstand the devastating effects of a wildland fire. FAC helps to create a collaborative community-wide effort, where all parties, citizens and government, are involved in successfully adapting to their wildland fire challenge. FAC's website, www.FireAdapted.org, provides beneficial resources and information.

Fire is, and always has been, a natural occurrence in the wildland. Hills, canyons and forests burned periodically long before homes were built. Wildland fires are fueled by a build-up of dry vegetation and driven by seasonal hot dry winds. They also are extremely dangerous and difficult to control. Many people have built homes in the Wildland Urban Interface and landscaped without fully understanding the impact a fire may have on their lives. Few have adequately prepared their families for a timely evacuation in the event of a wildland fire.

It is not a question of **if**, but **when**, the next major wildland fire will occur. Through advance planning, understanding and preparation, we can all be partners in the wildland fire solution. The tips on the following pages are designed to create heightened awareness and a safer environment for you, your family and firefighters.

INSIDE

Wildland Urban Interface	3
What is Defensible Space?	4
Making Your Home Fire Resistant	5
Tour a Wildland Fire Ready Home	6-7
Ready – Prepare Your Family – Checklist	8
Set – As the Fire Approaches – Checklist	9
Go – Act Early – Checklist	10
Your Own Wildland Fire Action Guide	11
Safety Checklist	12

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Living in the Wildland Urban Interface and the Ember Zone

Ready, Set, Go! begins with a house that firefighters can defend

Defensible Space Works!

If you live next to a naturally vegetated area, often called the Wildland Urban Interface, you must prepare your property and modify vegetation to provide firefighters with the defensible space they need to protect your home. The buffer zone you create by altering weeds, brush and other vegetation helps keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risk from flying embers. Firewise Communities and other wildland fire preparedness education programs provide valuable guidance on property enhancements.



Even if you do not live in the WUI, you may live in the Ember Zone. A home within one mile of a natural area is in the Ember Zone. Wind-driven embers can threaten your home. You and your home must be prepared well before a fire occurs. Fires caused by embers can destroy homes or neighborhoods far from the actual front of the wildland fire.



What is Defensible Space?



Defensible space is the required space between a structures and the wildland fire area that, under normal conditions, creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildland fire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential for structure survivability during wildland fire conditions. For more information about defensible space zones and preparedness techniques within each, visit the Firewise Communities Program website, www.firewise.org.

ZONE ONE

0-30 feet around your home

- Use hard surfaces such as concrete or noncombustible rock mulch 0-5 feet around home.
- Use non-woody, low growing herbaceous vegetation. Succulent plants and ground covers are good choices.
- Store firewood, or other combustible materials, at least 30 feet away from your home, garage or attached deck.
- Remove branches overhanging or touching the roof to a distance of at least 10 feet.

ZONE TWO

30-100 feet around your home or to property line

- Create vegetation groups “islands” to break up continuous fuels around your home.
- Remove ladder fuels, creating a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing up trees.
- Remove leaf and needle debris from the yard.
- Keep grasses and wildflowers under 8” in height.

ZONE THREE

100-200 feet around your home or to property line

- Create and maintain a minimum of 10 feet between the tops of trees.
- Remove ladder fuels, creating a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing up trees.
- Remove dead trees and shrubs.

Ladder Fuels

Ladder fuels are those that will allow the fire to climb from the surface fuels into the upper portion of the tree. They can be eliminated by increasing horizontal and vertical separation between vegetation.



What is a Hardened Home?

Construction materials and the quality of the defensible space surrounding it, are what gives a home the best chance to survive a wildland fire. Embers from a wildland fire can find the weak link in your home's fire protection scheme and gain the upper hand due to a small, overlooked or seemingly inconsequential factors. However, there are measures you can take to safeguard your home from wildland fire. While you may not be able to accomplish all the measures listed below each will increase your home's and family's safety for survival during a wildland fire.



ROOFS

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home. Due to its large horizontal surface, embers land and ignite combustible materials and debris such as leaves and needles. Clean roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles and rain gutters on a regular basis.

EAVES

Embers can gather under open eaves and ignite exposed wood or other combustible material. 'Boxed-in' or soffited eaves provide better protection.

VENTS

Embers can enter the attic or other concealed spaces through vents and ignite combustible materials. Vents in eaves and cornices are particularly vulnerable, as are any unscreened vents.

WALLS

Combustible siding or other combustible or overlapping materials provide surfaces or crevices for embers to nestle and ignite.

WINDOWS and DOORS

Embers can enter through open windows and gaps in doors, including garage doors. Plants or combustible storage near windows can ignite from embers and generate heat that can break windows and/or melt combustible frames.

BALCONIES and DECKS

Embers can collect in or on combustible surfaces or the undersides of decks and balconies, ignite the material and enter the home through walls or windows.

To harden your home further, consider protecting your home with a residential fire sprinkler system. In addition to extinguishing a fire started by an ember that enters your home, it also protects you and your family year-round from any fire that may start in your home.

Tour a Wildland Fire Prepared Home

Home Site and Yard: Ensure you have 100 feet of managed vegetation around your home or to your property line. This area may need to be enlarged in severe fire hazard areas. This may mean looking past what you own to determine the impact a common slope or neighbors' yard will have on your property during a wildland fire. Remember the importance of routine maintenance. Keep woodpiles, propane tanks and combustible materials away from your home and other structures such as detached garages, barns and sheds. Ensure trees are far away from power lines.

Inside: Keep working fire extinguishers on hand. Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and near bedrooms. Test them monthly and change the batteries twice a year.

Address: Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road. Reflective numbering is recommended.

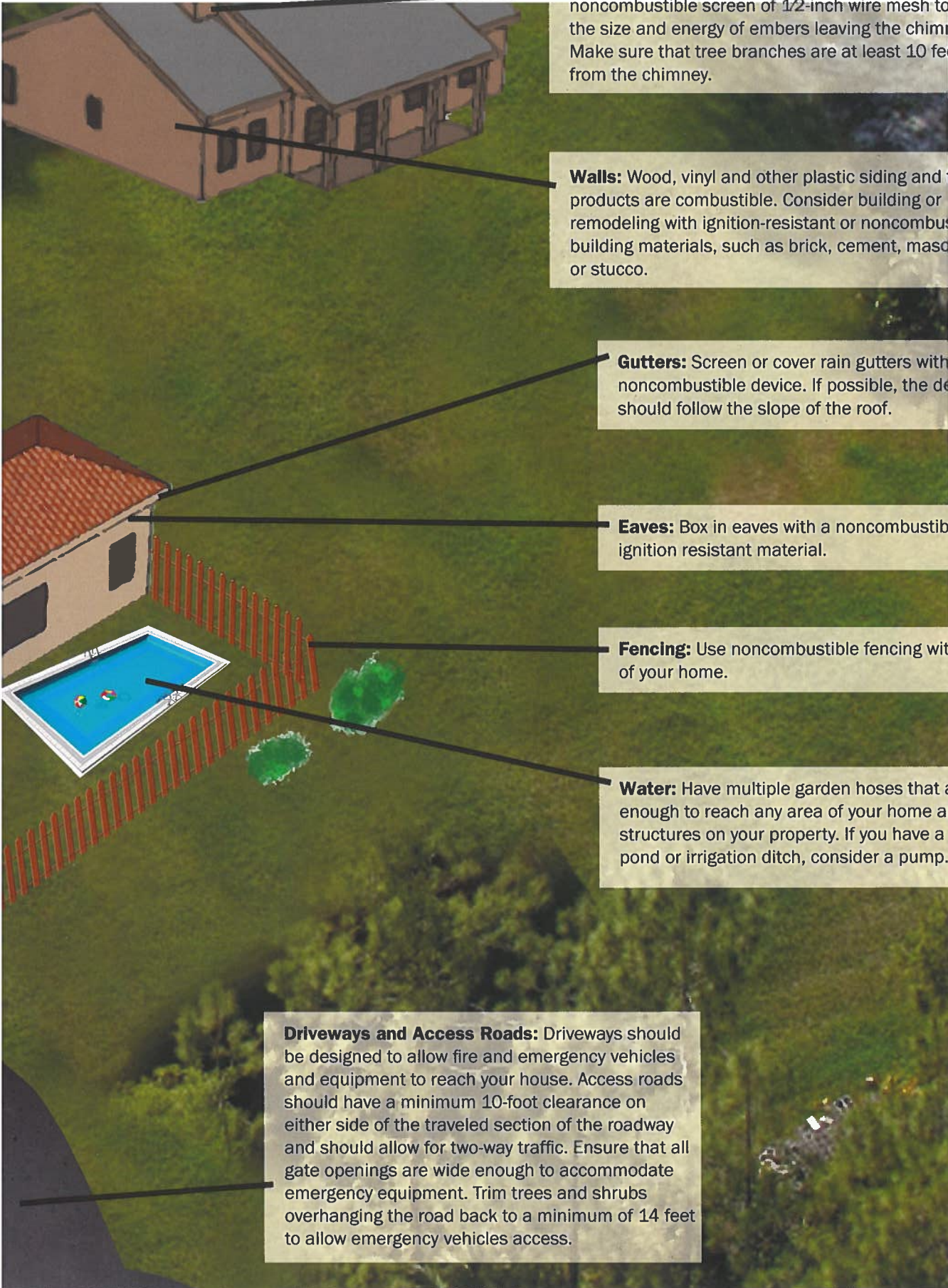
Deck/Patio Cover: Use heavy timber or noncombustible construction material for decks. Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire-resistant materials to prevent embers from blowing underneath. Keep your deck clear of combustible items, such as baskets, flower arrangements and other material.

Roof: Use a Class A fire-rated roof covering, such as composition shingles, metal or tile, when roofing or re-roofing. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to minimize ember intrusion. Clear pine needles, leaves and other debris from your roof and gutters. Prune tree branches within 10 feet of your roof.

Vents: At a minimum, all vent openings should be covered with 1/8-inch corrosion resistant metal mesh.

Windows: Radiant heat from burning vegetation or a nearby structure can cause the glass in windows to break. This will allow embers to enter and start internal fires. Single-pane and large picture windows are particularly vulnerable to glass breakage. Install dual-paned windows with a minimum of one pane being tempered glass to reduce the chance of breakage during a fire. Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation.

Garage: Install weather stripping around and under the vehicle access door. This will reduce the intrusion of embers. If the garage is attached to the home, install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and garage. Do not store combustibles and flammable liquids near combustion equipment (e.g. hot water heater).



Chimney: Cover chimney and stovepipe outlets with a noncombustible screen of 1/2-inch wire mesh to reduce the size and energy of embers leaving the chimney. Make sure that tree branches are at least 10 feet away from the chimney.

Walls: Wood, vinyl and other plastic siding and trim products are combustible. Consider building or remodeling with ignition-resistant or noncombustible building materials, such as brick, cement, masonry or stucco.

Gutters: Screen or cover rain gutters with a flat noncombustible device. If possible, the device should follow the slope of the roof.

Eaves: Box in eaves with a noncombustible or ignition resistant material.

Fencing: Use noncombustible fencing within 5 feet of your home.

Water: Have multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and other structures on your property. If you have a pool, pond or irrigation ditch, consider a pump.

Driveways and Access Roads: Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your house. Access roads should have a minimum 10-foot clearance on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic. Ensure that all gate openings are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment. Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road back to a minimum of 14 feet to allow emergency vehicles access.

READY, SET, GO!

Create Your Own Wildland Fire Action Guide

Now that you have done everything you can to prepare your home, it is time to prepare your family. Your **Wildland Fire Action Guide** must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a fire. Use these checklists to help you prepare and gain situational awareness of the threat of wildland fire. For more information on property and home preparedness before a fire threat, review the preparedness checklist on the Firewise Communities Program website, www.firewise.org.

Ready – Preparing for the Fire Threat



- Create a family disaster plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans. Rehearse it regularly. Also include the evacuation of pets and large animals.
- Have fire extinguishers on hand and train your family how to use them.
- Ensure that your family knows the location of your gas, electric and water main shut-off controls and how to use them.
- Plan and practice several different evacuation routes.
- Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire hazard area.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit as recommended by the American Red Cross. Keep an extra kit in your vehicle.
- Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers in your emergency supply kit.
- Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire.

Set – Situational Awareness when a Fire Starts

- Monitor fire weather conditions and fire status. See www.inciweb.org.
- Evacuate as soon as you are set!
- Alert family and neighbors.
- Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e. clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- Ensure that you have your emergency supply kit on hand that includes all necessary items, such as a battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and ample drinking water.
- Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates, or check the fire department website.
- Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and keep an eye on your family and pets until you are ready to leave.

INSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- Close all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.
- Move furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Turn off pilot lights and air conditioning.
- Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house and other structures under smoky conditions.



OUTSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- Bring combustible items from the exterior of the house inside (e.g. patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc). If you have a pool, place them inside.
- Turn off propane tanks and other gas at the meter.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running - they can waste critical water pressure.
- Leave exterior lights on.
- Back your car into the driveway to facilitate a quick departure. Shut doors and roll up windows.
- Have a ladder available.
- Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires until you leave.
- Cover attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial covers.

IF YOU ARE TRAPPED: SURVIVAL TIPS

- Remain inside your home until fire passes.
- Shelter away from outside walls.
- Bring garden hoses inside house so embers and flames do not destroy them.
- Patrol inside your home and look in your attic for spot fires and if found, extinguish them.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
- Stay hydrated.
- Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it is hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside).
- Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.
- Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- After the fire has passed, check your home and roof. Extinguish any small or smoldering fires and embers.
- Check inside the attic for hidden embers.
- If there are fires that you can not extinguish with a small amount of water or in a short period of time, call 9-1-1.

Go – Act Early

By leaving early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job in a safer environment.

WHEN TO LEAVE

Do not wait to be advised to leave if there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route. Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. If you are advised to leave by local authorities, do not hesitate!

MEETING LOCATION

Leave to a predetermined location. It should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, an American Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.

HOW TO GET THERE

Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles and equipment. Choose an escape route away from the fire.

WHAT TO TAKE

Take your emergency supply kit containing your prepared family and pet's necessary items.



EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

The American Red Cross recommends every family have an emergency supply kit assembled long before a wildland fire or other emergency occurs. Use the checklist below to help assemble yours. For more information on emergency supplies, visit the American Red Cross or your state's Emergency Preparedness Agencies website.

- Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day).
- Non-perishable food for all family members and pets (three-day supply).
- First aid kit.
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, and cash or traveler's checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- Important family documents and contact numbers.
- Map marked with evacuation routes.
- Prescriptions or special medications.
- Family photos, valuables and other irreplaceable items that are easy to carry.
- Easily carried valuables.
- Personal computers, hard drives, disks, and flash drives.
- Chargers for electronic communication devices.
- Insurance Documents.

Note: Keep a pair of old shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.

My Personal Wildland Fire Action Guide

Write up your Wildland Fire Action Guide and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

During high fire danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildland fire.

Important Phone Numbers:

Out-of-Area Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Work: _____

School: _____

Other: _____

Evacuation Routes: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Meeting Location: _____

Location of Emergency Supply Kit: _____

Notes: _____

For wildland fire information: www.inciweb.org or visit your State Forestry Page





READY, SET, GO!

Safety Checklist Tips To Improve Family and Property Survival During A Wildland Fire

Home	Yes	No
1. Does your home have a noncombustible (such as metal, composition, tiles, etc.) with capped ends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are the rain gutters and roof free of leaves, needles and branches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are all vent openings screened with 1/8 inch mesh metal screen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are approved spark arrestors on chimneys?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the house have noncombustible or ignition resistant siding material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are the eaves "boxed in" using noncombustible materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are the windows double-paned or tempered glass?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are the decks, porches and similar like areas made of noncombustible material? Are the area(s) free of easily combustible material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Is all firewood at least 30 feet from the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Defensible Space	Yes	No
1. Has vegetation been removed to the recommended defensible space zones around your home? (Considering adding distance due to slope of property.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is there recommended and maintained separation between shrubs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Have ladder fuels been removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is there a clean and green area extending at least 30 feet from the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Has the noncombustible zone been developed and maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is there recommended and maintained separation between trees and crowns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Emergency Access	Yes	No
1. Is the home address visible from the street?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is the home address made of noncombustible material and reflective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are street signs present at every intersection leading to the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are street signs made of noncombustible materials and reflective?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is flammable vegetation within 10 feet of the driveway cleared and are overhanging obstructions removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. If a long driveway is present, does it have a suitable turnaround area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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