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Wildfire Safety

General Overview and Best Practices

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Welcome

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This webinar is for:

- Safety/Risk Managers
- Administrators
- Facilities, maintenance, operations
- Policyholders, agents, brokers




This webinar covers:

- Trends and stats
- Plan: Building Construction
- Protect: Defensible Zones
- Respond: Emergency Response and Life Safety

Poll #1

What are the three main causes of wildfires?

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- Humans
 - Volcanos
 - Lightning strikes
 - Gender reveal parties
 - Smoking
 - Campfires

Some unfortunate facts about wildfire

Over the past 10 years*:

- There were an average of 64,100 wildfires annually.
- There were an average of 6.8 million acres burned annually.

*Source: The Congressional Research Service

Some unfortunate facts about wildfire

- As of September 1, 2020, nearly 40,000 wildfires have burned over 4 million acres YTD.
- Costs associated with wildfire safety were \$2.4 Billion in 2017.
- The US Forest Service estimates wildfire safety efforts will account for 67% of the entire budget for 2021.

Why the upward trend?

Factors determining wildfire season severity:

- Increased fire activity
- Hot/dry summers
- Strong winds

**Source: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)*



Why the upward trend?

Factors determining wildfire season severity (cont):

- Insects – bark beetles; Asian borers
- Over-forestation
- Population growth near the wilderness
 - Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)
 - New development
 - Population shifts

*Source: National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)



Poll #2

Once ignited, what is the primary way wildfires spread?

- Burning vegetation
- Global warming
- Lightning strikes
- Powerlines
- Embers

Plan



Building Construction Considerations

Roof: Most vulnerable part of the structure

- Wood shingle roofs = high risk
- Reroof with metal or tile
- Block spaces between roof deck and covering

Building Construction Considerations

Vents: Creates opening for flying embers

- Cover vents with 1/16 to 1/18 metal mesh
- Protect vents in eaves with rated baffles, mesh is not enough
- Roof access may be limited

Eaves and Soffits: Should be non-combustible or fire resistant

Examples



Building Construction Considerations

Walls: Wood products, shingles, panels, siding should be avoided. Use ignition resistant materials such as stucco, fiber cement siding, or other approved materials.

Garage or Bay Doors: Install weather stripping around and under the doorway to prevent embers from blowing inside.

Building Construction Considerations

Decks-Patio Covers-Fences: Surfaces within 10 feet of the building should be built with ignition-resistant or non-combustible materials. Enclose or board up the area under the deck.

Windows: Heat can break windows and allow embers to enter before structure is on fire. Single pane windows are particularly vulnerable. Install dual pane windows with one pane being tempered or fire-rated glass.

Examples



Protect



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Establish Defensible Space Zones

Immediate zone 0 to 5 feet around house/building. This is the most vulnerable area.

Intermediate zone 5 to 30 feet around house/building/structures/decks.

Extended zone 30 to 100 feet.



Defensible Space Zones

Also applies to commercial buildings



Immediate Zone



No tree limbs overhanging the roof. Trim back 10 feet.

Keep the roof and gutters clean of leaves and needs.

Non-combustible options like crushed stone or gravel.

Move wood piles and garbage cans and bins 30' or more away.

Non-combustible fence section when attached to a building.

Hardscaping.

Intermediate Zone



Remove fire prone plants.

Plant fire resistant plants.

Maintain vegetation by watering and trimming.

Removing dry leaves, needles, pinecones, and twigs.

Tree limbs to 6' to 10' above the ground.

Space between shrubs two times the height of the shrub. Increase the space on steeper slopes.

Extended Zone



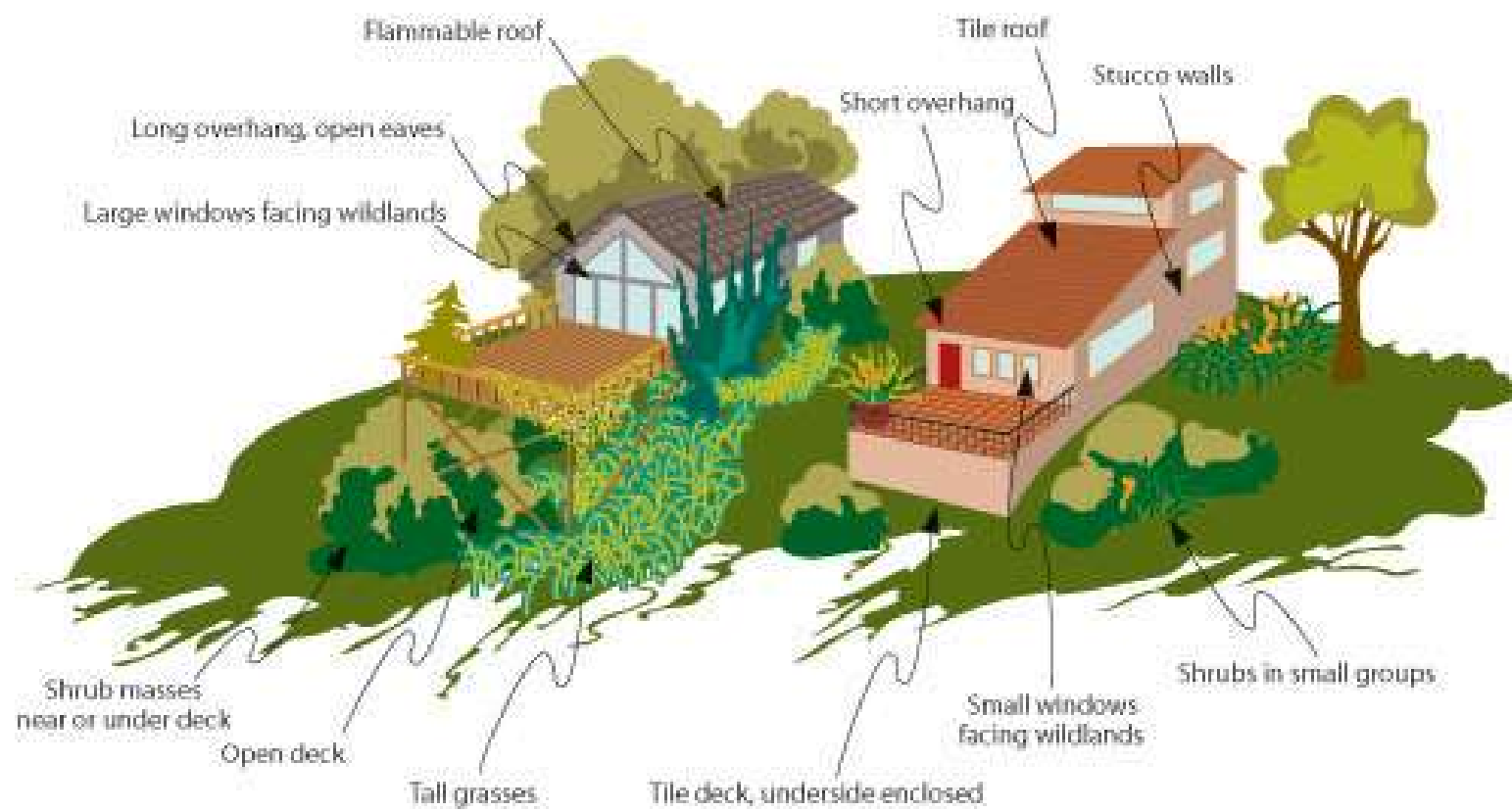
Remove leaves, needles, cones, twigs and branches no more than 3 inches high.

Cut and mow to no more than 4 inches.

Remove debris piles.

Horizontal spacing between shrubs and trees.

Vertical spacing between grass, shrubs, and trees.



Defensible Space Equipment



Defensible Zones at Work



Defensible Zones at Work



Respond



How will your organization respond under threat of Wildfire?

- Maintain access roads with a minimum of 10 feet of clearance on either side, allowing for two-way traffic.
- Provide access to all sides of your structures.
- Make sure address numbers clearly visible from the road. 4" numbers reflective or lighted.
- Pre-plan with the local fire department – include contact info
 - ❖ For a more comprehensive business continuity plan, talk to your agent or your Great American Loss Control Consultant
- Copies of important documents (personnel files, contracts, birth certificates, passports)
- Off-site back-up of company records

How will your organization respond under threat of Wildfire?

- Photos and other irreplaceable items
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, Printer, etc.
- Three-day supply of non-perishable food and three gallons of water per person.
- Prescriptions or special medications
- Change of clothing
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or traveler's checks
- First aid kit
- Flashlight

How will your organization respond under threat of Wildfire?

PRE-PLAN

Answer questions like:

- When will you evacuate?
- How will you evacuate? What do you need? What is your route? What are your alternative routes?
- How do you know where everyone is going?
- How will I account for employees?
- How will you address exposure to smoke?

Additional tips and suggestions

- Work with your local fire protection district.
- Pre-arrangement equipment/resource needs. Actively maintain those arrangements.
- Share your evacuation routes with local law enforcement.
- [GAIG LC Content Hub](#)

