

How to Reduce Wildfire Risk

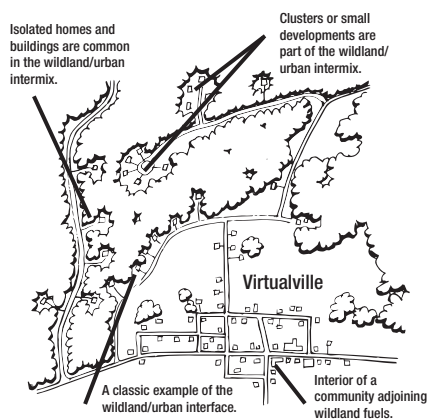


from the **TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN**

The purpose of this bulletin is to help stop a national tragedy. The annual loss of homes destroyed by wildfire would decrease if more people were aware of the fact that no area of the country is immune to these disasters, that the right use of trees and other vegetation — not necessarily their elimination — can help protect homes, and that some basic principles should guide home construction in forested areas.

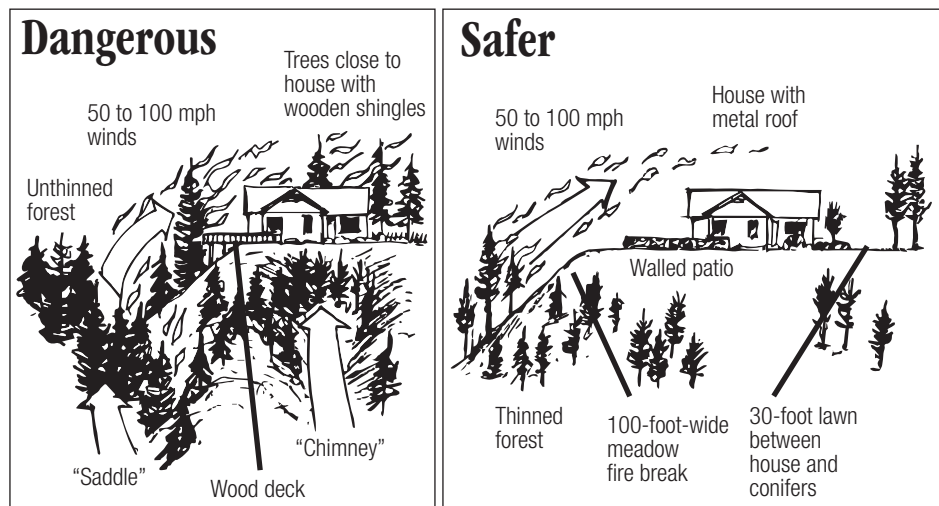
It has been said that change is one of the inevitable facts of life. Homes have and will continue to be built in natural settings. And fires will burn in the vegetated landscape. They will burn whether in Maine, Long Island, the Adirondack Mountains, the Deep South, Great Plains, the chaparral of California, or the pine forests of the Rocky Mountains and Pacific Northwest.

Where urban development meets the vegetated landscape, or wildland fuels, at a well-defined boundary, the area is defined as the wildland/urban interface. More typically, development is scattered throughout the wildland/urban intermix. Either way, the wildlands may be old fields, shrubs, forests, or some combination of these. In all cases, if you live in one of these areas, or even in the interior of an interface neighborhood, you should read this bulletin carefully. It could save your home and possibly your life.



The risk of wildfire exists in all parts of the country. Three high-risk areas are shown here, but precautions should be taken even by residents in the interior of Virtualville. High winds and flammable structures have spread flames far into developed neighborhoods, including Oakland, California, where 3,000 dwellings were destroyed in 1991.

Landscaping and grounds maintenance can do a lot to keep wildfire away from dwellings, but where a building is located and how it is built can also help ward off disaster. This is especially important because of spot fires started ahead of the main fire by embers blowing in the wind or the fire's convection currents.



LOCATION

The edges of cliffs and hillsides provide a great view, but they are also prone to sliding and even more prone to being caught in the path of flames sweeping up slopes. When possible, select a home site in level terrain or back at least 30 feet from a drop-off. Topographic saddles and canyons in wildland areas are also dangerous because of the pre-heating that can occur as fires move uphill.

BUILDING MATERIALS

It should go without saying that fire-resistant building materials should be used in fire-prone areas. However, every year houses go up in flames because this was ignored during the planning stage of building a home. When building or remodeling, insist on:

- Noncombustible roof materials such as Class-A asphalt shingles; slate, clay, or terracotta tiles; metal; or concrete products — not wood shingles
- A fire-resistant subroof
- Fire-resistant siding (such as stucco or masonry, not vinyl and trim)

- Double pane and tempered glass for windows and sky lights; smaller vs. larger windows
- Non-flammable screening shutters for windows and skylights

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Landscaping by zones around the house for safety
- A home maintenance checklist
- Fire-resistant plans
- Why wildland fires are an urban forestry issue
- Much more