

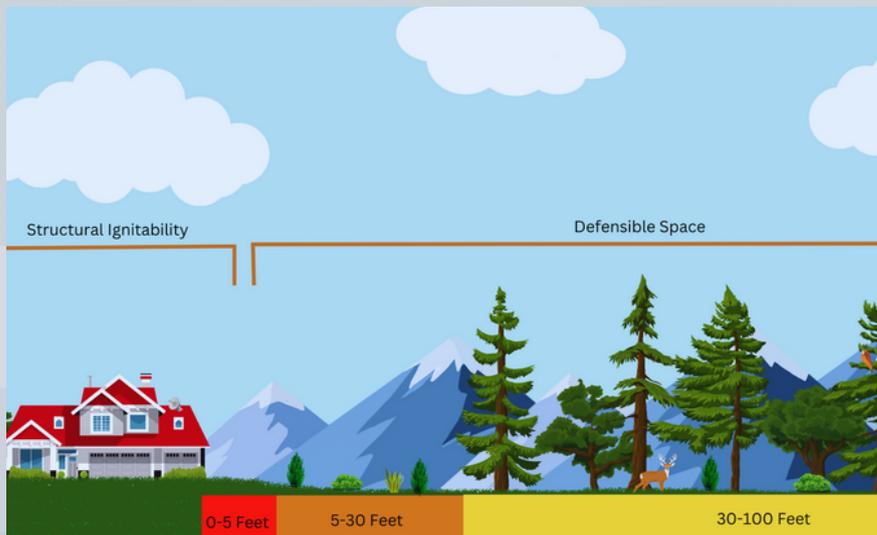
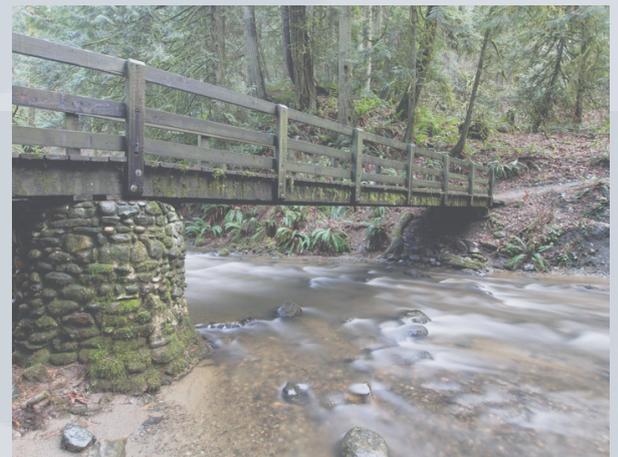
Wildfires are becoming an increasing problem in Bellingham - Is your home prepared?

Wildfires have historically occurred throughout Western Washington's coastal environments. Incremental changes in conditions including higher average temperatures, less summer rainfall, earlier snow melt, and an increase in development near forested areas are leading to an increasing frequency, intensity, and duration of wildfires.

The damages that wildfires cause to our communities can be mitigated. You can take simple steps to limit the likelihood of your home being damaged by wildfire.

Know Your Risk

Your home may be located in an area of high wildfire risk even within the city. Drier conditions increase the chance of ignition within forested portions of Bellingham. Airborne fire embers can ignite homes in proximity to forested land or parkland even if structures are not located immediately adjacent to trees. To reduce your risk, there are simple steps that you can take:



Creating a Defensible Space

By creating a defensible space, along with making changes to a structure, the odds of your property surviving a wildfire dramatically increase.

0-5 feet from home: This zone is the most stringent. It is key to make sure that there is little to no brush within this zone. It's also key to make sure that decks or other structures are free from debris, and that there aren't any other fuel sources like mulch placed up against the home.

5-30 feet from home: Within the 5 to 30 foot zone it is recommended to maintain separation between trees. It is also key to remove ladder fuel or brush that can help fires move from the ground to trees crowns. Firewood piles should also be covered if possible.

30-100 feet from home: This extended zone is used as a means of slowing an approaching fire. If you have the ability it is a good idea to space out trees. It is also a good measure to limit brush buildup in this area as much as possible.



Individual Mitigation Actions

Things to look for on your property:

- Small nooks where embers can build up against your house
- Whether your address is visible and driveway is passible for emergency vehicles
- Flammable landscaping in the 0-5 foot zone near your house
- If any vents on your home lack mesh screening
- Brush piles or firewood piles close to your home
- Dead branches or leaves near home
- Space where embers could get trapped
- Decks that have debris or other flammable things on or under them
- Debris in your gutters, around skylights, or on the roof

Actions you can take to reduce risk:

- Cover eaves and other crevices with mesh to limit ember buildup in corner nooks.
- Place visible reflective markers on roadway, ensure your driveway is 12 feet wide and is not overhung by branches.
- Use gravel or other non flammable materials in the 0-5 foot zone if possible.
- Cover vents with 1/8th inch mesh to limit ember ingress.
- Cover brush or firewood piles with fire resistant tarps in summer months or when not in use.
- Pick up dead branches and rake leaves, keep grass mowed in summer
- Keep deck clean, add screening around edges to reduce material building up underneath deck, use non-combustible building materials if possible
- Clean gutters and roof periodically, especially during wildfire season

Becoming a FIREWISE Community

For many homeowners, the extended zone (30-100 ft) can include other neighbors' property. This is why conversation with neighbors is important to wildfire mitigation. If the properties surrounding your own home are also made resistant to wildfires, this will further reduce the likelihood of damages to your property. By starting this conversation in your community, you could potentially work towards becoming a Firewise community.

A Firewise community is a community that's taken a broad range of measures including reducing home risk, and extending their defensible space in an effort to become more resistant to wildfire property damage. The benefit of working towards being a Firewise Community is that you be able to collaborate with others to work towards a common goal of wildfire risk reduction. Neighborhoods will be able to follow a framework that provides specific actions for reducing risk. Communities will also be able to learn more about wildfire safety and ecology.

Wildfire risk reduction is more than just an individual project. This is a much larger effort than solely reducing risk on your property. Fire easily spreads from one property to the next. Working with your neighbors to reduce overall fire risk is key to limit the spread of wildfires within your community, and move towards making your neighborhood wildfire resistant.

More helpful resources...

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/firewise-communities/>

<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/firewise>

<https://www.whatcomcd.org/wildfire>

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Become-a-Firewise-USA-site/Program-benefits>

https://www.sightline.org/2022/11/16/uncontainable-wildfires-are-inevitable-community-destruction-is-not/?utm_source=Sightline+Newsletters+II&utm_campaign=b6dc617ae2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_11_22_09_02_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3e1b0f73ac-b6dc617ae2-296401569

More info about
Firewise
Communities:



Wildfire
Preparedness
info from
Whatcom
Conservation
District



How to Create a
Defensible
Space from
Washington
State DNR

