

Steps to Becoming a Firewise Community

Step 1 Contact Virginia Department of Forestry

Becoming recognized as a Firewise Community/USA begins with the community itself.

Step 2 Site Visit

A VDOF representative will schedule a visit to evaluate the community.

Step 3 Form a Firewise Committee

A Firewise committee can include homeowners, fire professionals, and/or members of other interest groups.

Step 4 Create a Plan

Upon completion of the Firewise assessment it is used as the basis for creating a plan that contains agreed-upon, area-specific solutions to its wildfire issues. Full development of the Firewise plan may take several months.

Step 5 Sponsor an Event

A Firewise Day must be held each year to maintain recognition status. Firewise Days can include chipping days, public awareness events, brush clearing or other activities.

Step 6 Invest a Minimum of \$2 per Capita

For example, in a community of 100 residents, \$200 will be invested in projects named in the plan prepared by the Firewise Committee. Volunteer hours and use of equipment can be included in this figure.

Step 7 Recognition

Firewise Communities/USA recognition status is achieved when the Virginia Department of Forestry receives the community's completed Firewise plan, and after the community has completed one Firewise project.

Step 8 Renewing Your Recognition Status

Recognition renewal is completed by December 31st each year by filling out a very short form.

A Disaster Plan

The time to plan for any emergency is prior to the event. Take a few minutes to discuss with your family what actions you will take.

- ✓ Have tools available: shovel, rake, axe, handsaw or chainsaw, and water source.
- ✓ Post local emergency telephone numbers in a visible place.
- ✓ Leave before it's too late. Decide where you will go and how you will get there. Two escape routes out of your home and out of your neighborhood are preferable.
- ✓ Have a plan for your pets.
- ✓ Practice family fire drills.



When wildfire conditions exist, evacuations can occur without notice; be ready to take action.

For More Information

For more information about VDOF services or programs, please contact your local Virginia Department of Forestry office or visit:

dof.virginia.gov

Western Region Office, Salem:

Phone: (540) 387-5461

Central Region Office, Charlottesville:

Phone: (434) 977-5193

Eastern Region Office, Providence Forge:

Phone: (804) 966-5092



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Protect Your Home and Community

From the beauty of the landscape to the privacy and quiet, you know the benefits of living in one of Virginia's forested areas are numerous and varied. Yet, with that high quality of life comes the risk of wildland fire.

Dry leaves, pine needles, dead tree limbs and flammable plants serve as the fuel for fires in communities such as yours. But there are several steps you can take to reduce the risk to you and your neighbors. By becoming "Firewise," you and your community will ensure that the quality of life you enjoy today will be there tomorrow.

Please take a few moments to read the material within this pamphlet, and share it with your neighbors. By following these guidelines, you will make your home and your neighbors' a Firewise community.

Emergency Access

Identify your home and neighborhood with legible and clearly marked street names and numbers so response vehicles can rapidly find the location of the emergency. Include a driveway that is at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet – to provide access to emergency vehicles.



Firefighters Need Your Help

Is Your Home Firewise?



Virginia Department of Forestry

Firewise Landscaping

To create a landscape that will make your home less vulnerable to wildfire, the primary goal is fuel modification. Zone 1 is closest to your home, Zone 4 is the farthest away.

Zone 1 This well-irrigated area of at least 30 feet on all sides, provides defensible space. Plants should be limited to carefully spaced fire-resistant tree and shrub species.

Zone 2 Use low-growing, fire-resistant plant materials. Irrigation system should extend into this zone.

Zone 3 Place low-growing plants and well-spaced trees in this area; keep volume of vegetation (fuel) low.

Zone 4 Thin selectively and remove highly flammable vegetation in this natural area.

✓ Keep trees, shrubs pruned. Prune trees 6 to 12 feet from ground. Dispose of cuttings and debris properly.

✓ Clear dead wood and dense vegetation within 30 feet of your house; move firewood away from house or attachments.



Although mulch helps retain soil moisture, when dry, it can become flammable.

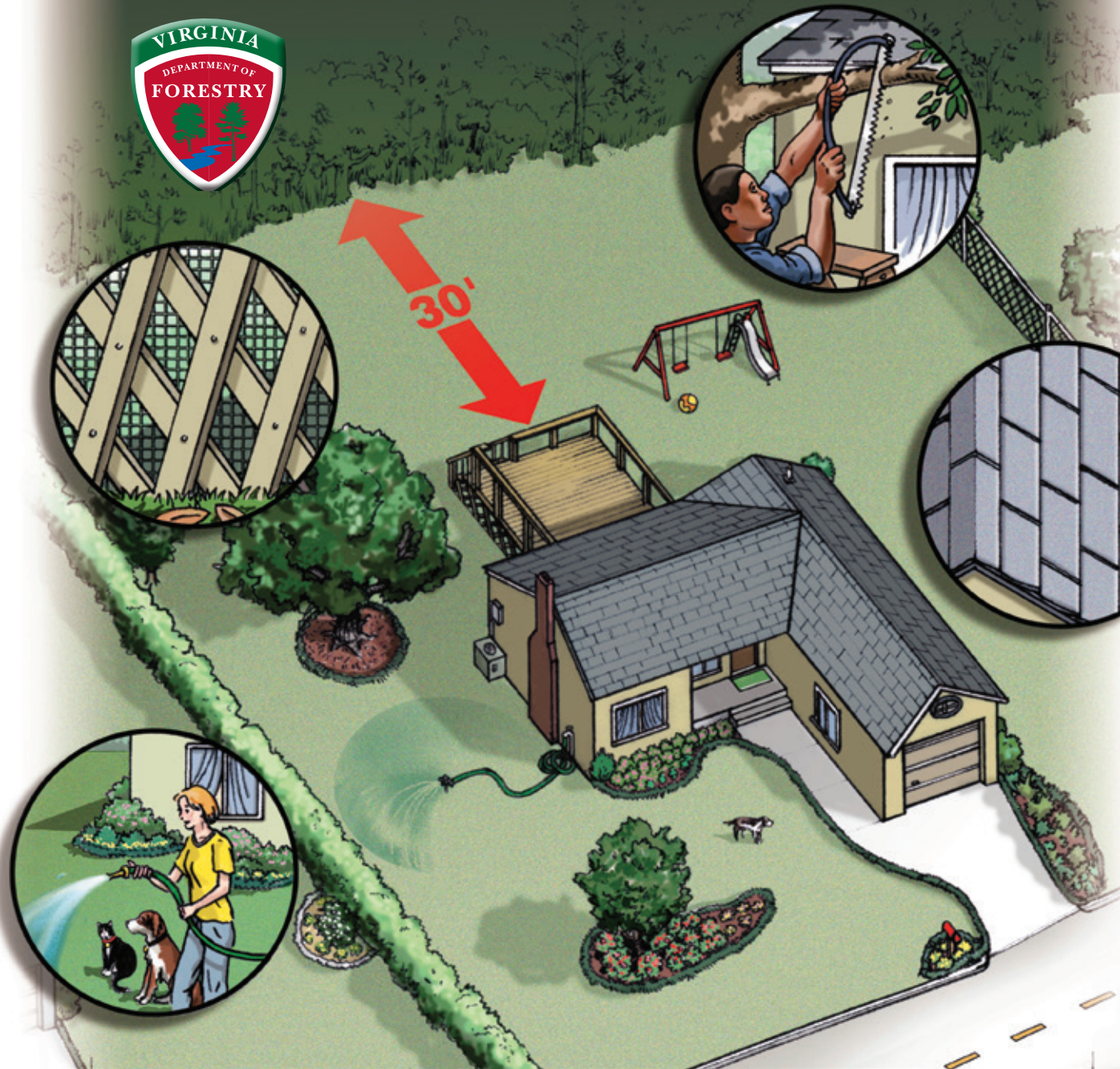
Defensible Space

Do you have at least 30 feet of space surrounding your home that is lean, clean and green?

The objective of defensible space is to reduce the wildfire threat to your home by changing the characteristics of the flammable vegetation.

Lean – Prune shrubs and cut back tree branches, especially within 15 feet of your chimney.

Clean – Remove all dead plant material from around your home; this includes leaves, dry vegetation and even stacked firewood. Plants, such as ornamental junipers, hollies, red cedar and young pine, that contain resins, oils and waxes burn readily – remove them.



Green – Plant fire-resistant vegetation that is healthy and green throughout the year. Use less-flammable plants: Azalea, Viburnum, Crepe Myrtle, Spirea, Hydrangea, Annual and Perennial Flowers, Ferns, Dogwood, Redbud, Red Maple and Oak. Mow, maintain and water your lawn regularly.

Fire-Resistant Roof and Exterior Construction

✓ Firewise construction materials include Class-A asphalt shingles, metal, tile and concrete products. Additionally, the inclusion of a fire-resistant sub-roof adds protection.

✓ Wall materials that resist heat and flames include brick, cement, plaster, stucco and concrete masonry. Tempered and double-pane glass windows can make a home more resistant to wildfire heat and flames. Although some vinyl will not burn, vinyl soffits and plastic skylights can melt, allowing embers into the attic space.

✓ Wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch can be used to prevent sparks from entering your home through vents, as well as preventing combustible materials and debris from accumulating beneath decks or elevated porches.



Simply making sure that your gutters, eaves and roof are clear of debris will reduce your fire threat.

Fire-Resistant Attachments

✓ Attachments include any structure, such as decks, porches or fences, connected to your home. These structures can act as fuses or fuel bridges. If an attachment to a home is not fire-resistant, then the home as a whole is not firewise.

✓ If you wish to attach an all-wood fence to your home, use masonry or metal as a protective barrier between the fence and house.

For additional information about Firewise:

Virginia Department of Forestry
Firewise Program – firewisevirginia.org
Agency Web Site – dof.virginia.gov

National Firewise Organization
firewise.org