

Firewise Education – for Horse and Small Acreage Livestock Owners



Wildfire can be caused by lightning or human-caused ignitions or through the spreading and advancing of wildfire which began elsewhere. Windblown embers from a nearby fire up can travel up to a mile away, landing on buildings or combustibles and igniting. In southwestern Idaho, high temperatures, limited summer rainfall, strong winds and lightning storms all lead to very high fire danger.

The amount of fire risk your horse property faces is influenced by:

- location, slope and accessibility of your property,
- amount, type and location of surrounding vegetation,
- the condition and placement of buildings,
- availability of water,
- your physical capabilities and those of family members or employees.

This checklist will help you identify wildfire risks for your horse property, farm or ranch and offer appropriate actions to minimize risks. Follow up by consulting the Evacuation Planning Checklist to help you put together a firewise evacuation plan for your property and animals should the threat of wildfire become real.

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RISK	DETAILS	PLANS FOR NEW BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES	PROTECT EXISTING BUILDINGS	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Buildings less than 15 feet apart are a risk for spreading fire		When planning or building new outbuildings place them as far apart as is reasonably possible	Create a defensible space between buildings that are less than 15 feet apart. A defensible space is an area where combustibles and vegetation is kept to a minimum.	Click here to read more about creating a Defensible space (fire control around buildings)
Structures on top of a hill are at greater fire risk	Fires behave differently on slopes and in draws than on flat areas. Fires burn uphill more rapidly than down or across a flat. Draws can serve as a chimney, creating more intense fires that spread rapidly with uphill drafts.	When possible, locate barns, shelters and other structures on flat land or towards the bottom of a slope; avoid tops of hills and draws.	A minimum defensible space of 100 feet is recommended for homes and outbuildings on flat ground, and up to 200 feet or more for sloped sites..	The science of fire
Landscaping with trees, mulch or lots of vegetation can lead a fire directly to buildings		Choose landscaping plants that have a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High moisture content (redflower current) • High salt or soap content (honeysuckle, soapwort, saltbrush, mock orange) • Low growing, compact form (creeping phlox, stonecrop) • Low oil or resin content (clematis, flax) • Drought tolerant (penstemon, globemallow) • Green stems (succulents) and small leaves (hops vine) 	Create a firewise landscape around your home, barn and other structures using plants that are low growing, drought tolerant, high moisture content, high salt or soap content, low oil or resin content and have green stems. The defensible space of a firewise landscape is divided into three treatment zones that extend out approximately 100 feet total from buildings. Fire resistance increases as you get closer to your home, barn or outbuildings.	Idaho Firewise Firewise Landscaping for Horse Properties Visit the Idaho Botanical Garden’s BLM Firewise Garden for on-the-ground ideas Firewise Landscaping with vines and groundcover

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Flammable outdoor items can catch an ember and ignite			Remove items such as wood patio furniture, brooms, flowerboxes and flammable doormats. Replace with non-flammable materials such as wrought iron patio furniture.	
Wooden or plastic fences burn and can lead a fire to buildings		Choose other types of fencing when possible. It's especially important to avoid combustible fencing when it attaches to buildings or structures.	If you have combustible fencing that attaches to building or structures, create a removable section such as a gate or panel that can be removed, left open or replaced with a non-flammable barrier when there's a threat of fire.	
Combustible sidings or roofs like cedar shake, wood, vinyl or plastics can easily catch fire		When building or planning new outbuildings choose non-flammable materials such as metals for sidings and roofs. Consider tile, brick or adobe – and green roofs, too!	Replace combustible sidings or roofs with non-flammables.	Firewise Building Materials Green roofs
Crops, especially when dried, such as corn, can easily burn	A firebreak is a 15' to 30' buffer of cleared land placed between combustibles and structures		<p>Create a firebreak, a buffer of cleared land, between combustible crops and other structures (buildings, fences, etc.) A firebreak can be a plowed or disked strip, a dirt road, a path mowed down low or possibly even a walking trail.</p> <p>A green firebreak can be created by planting forage kochia, a highly nutritious, fire-resistance non-native.</p>	Creating a firebreak Forage kochia and green firebreaks

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Cheatgrass and dry, weedy areas	Cheatgrass is a European invasive annual grass that outcompetes native grasses and forbs for moisture and water. Highly flammable when dry.		Remove cheatgrass and dried weeds through grazing, mowing, prescribed burning or herbicide use. Grazing goats can be used to remove potentially flammable grasses, forbs and shrubs	Reduce fire risk with goats Where goats grazed fire burned slowly in Boise Foothills Grazing goats in the Boise Foothills
Rangeland and dry land or open fields		Develop a grazing plan to reduce fire risk on rangeland or dried fields.	Keep dried vegetation that is within 100 feet of buildings and structures grazed low and green during fire seasons.	
Hay, bedding, large compost lies or livestock feed	Spontaneous combustion is combustion without external ignition	Locate storage areas for these materials away from livestock, barns and other structures.	Store hay, bedding and other livestock feed away from stables and in a dry, covered area. Use a 15' – 30' firebreak of cleared land, concrete pad, gravel driveway or dirt path. Be sure hay is dry before storing; hay that is too moist may spontaneously combust.	Spontaneous combustion
Propane & fuel storage			Keep these items 30' away from buildings, wood fences or structures; create a 10' non-combustible zone around tanks; regularly clear out wind-blown debris and weeds from these areas.	

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Dust and cobwebs			Avoid spontaneous combustion and ignition sources by cleaning and minimizing dust and cobweb accumulations along building sides, in barns and under overhangs in all farm buildings	
Debris in gutters and on roofs			Clean roof surfaces and gutters to remove leaves, branches or debris.	
Firewood, trash, lumber, empty feed sacks			Keep these materials a minimum of 15' away from buildings or other combustibles.	
Equipment and vehicles			Avoid parking tractors and vehicles in or near the barn. Engine heat and backfires can spark a flame. Store machinery and other flammable materials outside the barn.	
Addition safety tips to help prevent barn and farm fires		Inspect electrical systems regularly and immediately correct problems.	Damage from rodents chewing on electrical wiring or bird nesting materials can quickly become a fire hazard.	
		Put smoke detectors in barns and buildings; place fire extinguishers near doorways in barns, in vehicles and tractors.	Heat sensors should be hooked up to sirens to quickly alert you and your neighbors to a possible barn fire. Keep fresh batteries in all detectors and alarms. Check fire extinguishers annually and recharge as needed.	

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		Post your property address at the entrance to your property so it's clearly visible from the main road.		
		Post emergency phone numbers including those of the barn manager, veterinarian, emergency response and other qualified horse handlers near a phone or in a central area.		
		Keep your barn's street address clearly posted to relay to 911 or your community's emergency services near a phone or in a central area.		
		Keep appliances in barn to a minimum; reduce use of or carefully monitor electrical use in barns, such as heating lamps, extension cords, space heaters, water trough heaters, etc. Only use items such as stall fans, space heaters and radios only when someone is nearby or in the barn.		

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		Make certain fire trucks and emergency vehicles can access your property; check for obstructing overhead utility lines, tree branches, ranch gates or signs, rocks or other landscaping.	Driveways should be an all-weather surface adequate for large, heavy vehicles; at least 12' wide with a 2' clearance zone on either side (16' total;) vertical clearance of 14' recommended; sharp turns discouraged; space for emergency vehicles to pass one another is recommended.	Driveway Access for Emergency Vehicles
		Familiarize your horses and staff with emergency procedures and activities they might encounter during a wildfire.		
		Keep aisles, stall doors, and barn doors free of debris and equipment for quicker access in and out in an emergency.		
		Hold an annual meeting with neighbors, friends or other mutual interest groups to discuss fire contingency plans. Establish who will check on/help whom and which resources can be shared.		
		Take First Aid and CPR courses and keep the manuals handy; the same basic principles apply to animals. Prepare a basic First Aid kit that is portable and easily accessible.		The American Red Cross offers classes on wildfire protection , wilderness and remote first aid as well as pet first aid

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Safety tips for horse owners		<p>Keep halters ready for your horses. Each halter should include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the horse's name • your name • your cell# • an additional emergency telephone number 		
		<p>Place your horses' Coggins tests, vaccination history, identification photographs and other vital information—such as medical history, allergies, and emergency telephone numbers (veterinarian, family members, etc.)—in an envelope or notebook. Store the envelope with other important papers in a safe place that can be quickly reached or in a vehicle.</p>		