



# Fire Safety Beyond the City Limits

A Factsheet on Rural Fire Safety and Prevention

**A** move from an urban center to a suburb or rural area requires you to rethink fire safety. First, you must be aware of special fire hazards near wooded areas. Second, geographic location may create longer response times for fire and rescue services.

If you live in the rural-urban interface, the point where homes meet combustible vegetation, you must increase your role to protect lives and property in your community beyond the city limits.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) encourages you to practice the following fire safety steps in rural areas. Remember, fire safety is your personal responsibility... *Fire Stops With You!*

## FIRE FACTS ABOUT RURAL LIVING

- Once a fire starts outdoors in a rural area, it is often hard to control. Wildland firefighters are trained to protect natural resources, not homes and buildings.
- Many homes are located far from fire stations. The result is longer emergency response times. Within a matter of minutes, an entire home may be destroyed by fire.
- Limited water supply in rural areas can make fire suppression difficult.
- Homes may be secluded and surrounded by woods, dense brush and combustible vegetation that fuel fires.

## TIPS FOR FIREPROOFING YOUR PROPERTY

- Keep lawns trimmed, leaves raked, and the roof and rain-gutters free from debris such as dead limbs and leaves.
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet away from your home.
- Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside the home at least 30 feet away from structures and wooden fences.
- Create defensible space by thinning trees and brush within 30 feet around your home.

- Landscape your property with fire resistant plants and vegetation to prevent fire from spreading quickly.
- Post home address signs that are clearly visible from the road.
- Provide emergency vehicle access with properly constructed driveways and roadways, at least 12 feet wide with adequate turnaround space.
- Make sure water sources, such as hydrants and ponds, are accessible to the fire department.
- Burning yard waste is a fire hazard. Check with your local fire agency on a nonemergency number for fire permit requirements and restricted burning times.

## PROTECT YOUR HOME

- Use fire resistant, protective roofing and materials like stone, brick and metal to protect your home. Avoid using wood materials that offer the least fire protection.
- Cover all exterior vents, attics and eaves with metal mesh screens no larger than 6 millimeters.
- Install multipane windows, tempered safety glass or fireproof shutters to protect large windows from radiant heat.
- Use fire-resistant draperies for added window protection.

- Have chimneys, wood stoves and all home heating systems inspected and cleaned annually by a certified specialist.

## PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

- Know how to contact fire emergency services in your area.
- Plan ahead. Make sure you and your family are prepared for a fire emergency.
- Develop and practice escape and evacuation plans with your family.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Consider installing the new long-life smoke alarms.

## For More Information Contact:

**The United States Fire Administration**  
Office of Fire Management Programs  
16825 South Seton Avenue  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

**Or visit the USFA website:**  
[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

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