

## Buildings

The goal of an effective wildfire protection plan is to keep the fire from coming dangerously close to any building on the property and protect these buildings from ember exposures. This includes a house and any agricultural buildings or outbuildings. Once ignited, the building itself can become a source of radiant heat, flames and embers that can threaten nearby buildings and neighboring properties. An IBHS post-fire study and other research have shown that buildings located less than 15 feet apart are particularly vulnerable to this type of fire spread. If a building has combustible siding, such as wood, vinyl or other types of plastic, good defensible space will reduce the fire hazard. More information about protecting your home is available from your insurance agent or online at [www.disastersafety.org/wildfire](http://www.disastersafety.org/wildfire).

## Surroundings

Some types of crops and grazing vegetation typically grown on farms and ranches can allow for a wildfire to move quickly. This potential for rapid fire spread will affect ability to respond to the fire and ability to evacuate, both people and livestock. Preparation is important.

Think of combustible materials or items surrounding or attached to a building as a potential wick that can bring flames to the house or outbuilding. This might include hay stacks, livestock feed, and fuel stored to perform normal business operations. Remember fires started by wind-blown embers are the biggest threat to properties during a wildfire. Once these embers land on combustible materials, the potential for the wildfire to spread is much greater.

## Defensible Space Zones

Defensible space is the area between a home or building and the oncoming wildfire where vegetation and other combustible materials have been managed or moved to reduce the wildfire threat. It is critical to minimize combustible materials within 5 feet of a building. Effective defensible space helps the home or building survive without assistance from fire fighters.

Erecting fences, installing a security system and adding motion-detection lighting are all things security experts recommend for keeping intruders out. Think of defensible space in the same way. Keep in mind, just as with security systems, your defensible space is only effective if it is properly maintained.

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# REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK

## Farms and Ranches



Farm and ranch owners face unique risks from the threat of wildfire. Take control before a wildfire threatens and avoid the economic and personal upheavals that accompany such disasters.

A wildfire can be a threat to your farm or ranch. In order to minimize the potential for damage and loss from a wildfire, it is important to take actions that will reduce the chance for the wildland fire to burn directly to a home or building, and reduce the opportunity for wind-blown embers to ignite near-building items that could result in flames touching and igniting these buildings. Consider the vulnerability of all structures and combustible items on the property equipment, fences, livestock housing and storage facilities, and vegetation all of these will be vulnerable to a wildfire. Buildings that ignite during wildfires are often destroyed.

This guide contains simple – yet effective – information to help you prepare for a wildfire. Read and share it with employees – transfer risk into resiliency.

## Actions to take before a wildfire:

Develop evacuation plans for you and your employees. Conduct practice drills with family members and employees.

Develop an evacuation plan for livestock, including alternative locations for housing animals as appropriate. These areas would have minimal vegetation, such as those that are managed grazing areas.

Relocate the propane tanks at least 30 feet from any structures on the property or, if relocation is not an option, create a 10-foot noncombustible zone around the tank. An alternative solution is to build a noncombustible wall around two or three sides of the tank. Routinely clear out wind-blown debris that will accumulate in the enclosed space.

Create defensible space zones around areas where equipment, fuel and chemicals are stored. Use only approved noncombustible storage containers and construct fire walls that will separate adjacent storage areas. Prepare and post warning signs for hazardous chemicals.

Determine what your priorities are should you have to choose which of your assets to protect. (e.g., buildings, livestock, machinery, and feed).

Where applicable, indicate the locations of septic tanks and leach fields with fencing or other signage. Heavy equipment, including fire trucks and other equipment, can damage these systems and may result in the trucks getting stuck.

Clearly post weight limits for any bridges on the farm or ranch. Reinforce any bridges that cannot support the weight of a fire engine, or provide signed information on alternative routing.

Farms and ranches by their very nature are located in rural areas and likely away from traditional fire hydrants. Create and maintain water storage capabilities, such as a pond, water tank or cistern. Working with the local fire department can help determine best practices. Create signage to alert firefighters to the location of the water supply.

To the extent possible, separate and consolidate combustible materials and equipment. Create low combustible zones around buildings, such as barns and storage sheds, through the use of a concrete slab or gravel paths. These zones should be about 5 feet wide, extending outward from the building. Inspect these zones regularly and keep them clear of debris.

Dust can become an ignition source, particularly for wind-blown fire brands, if an excessive amount is allowed to accumulate on surfaces. Minimize dust accumulation on surfaces, including those that may become heated by the regular operation of farm machinery.

More information can be found at:

[www.disastersafety.org](http://www.disastersafety.org)

<http://texashelp.tamu.edu/005-agriculture/farms-ranches-wildfires.php>

<http://fire.countyofventura.org/Prevention/WildfirePreparedness/tabid/231/Default.aspx>

## Actions to take during a wildfire:

The first priority should be to protect human life. Livestock and employee evacuation plans should be in effect as soon as possible after observing or being notified of an oncoming wildfire.

If you are trapped inside a burning building, follow fire-safe procedures and precautions regarding opening doors, staying low to the ground, and covering your mouth with a cloth to avoid breathing smoke.

