On Any Given Weekend

Simple Things You Can Do to Help Your Home Become “Firewise”

Improving your home’s chances of surviving a wildfire can seem like an overwhelming task — one that you may feel is impossible to achieve. Not necessarily! Research shows that flying embers (hot droplets) and creeping surface fire are significant contributors to the loss of homes to wildfires — sometimes after the fire has passed. To begin making your home and property “Firewise,” start with the structures on your property and move out as time allows. Keep in mind that anything attached to a structure (fence, house, deck, side, etc.) is part of the structure.

As a final check, take a stroll around your property area with an imaginary match in your hand. If you see a place where “down and walking away, you still have some Firewise work to do. Firewise mailing to property owners, erected a Smokey Bear fire danger sign, and completed fuels reduction work in combination with home protection activities. The Village had been conducting these efforts for several years and had achieved some success; however, they recognized the need to make some changes to improve their Firewise status. They decided to implement their work to educate their community. A Firewise assessment conducted in 2009 by Local DNR staff and Firewise department personnel resulted in the development of community partnerships, Neighbor- tunity for their community. Steve Johnson, property manager at Voyager Village, is very happy because that info and awareness about the services, products, and direction of the department has been very helpful to their community. Relationships with Department staff were in place, they had already demonstrated accountability in conducting tested mitigation projects, and they were well within the process of becoming a Firewise Community. These plants, property manager at Voyager Village, recently sent this in an email, “I want to thank you for your help and staff over the past two years. I am very happy that we started on this early. We did not do anything to prepare for the storm, but we did it in the end after we had some success. We think it is important to do this now because that info and awareness about the services, products, and direction of the department has been very helpful to their community. Relationships with Department staff were in place, they had already demonstrated accountability in conducting tested mitigation projects, and they were well within the process of becoming a Firewise Community. 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Town of Rome Curbside Chipping Program

The Town of Rome in Adams County, Wisconsin is a community at very high risk to wildfires due to sandy soil, vegetation types (primarily pine and deciduous species and scrub oak/jack pine mix), and development patterns. It is a town of over 3,000 full time residents with a large population of folks that live outside of town by choice.

The majority of homes are located in high density wooded subdivisions where yards are close and living space is limited. This results in increasing quantities of standing and fallen dead timber. This fuel buildup is not a problem of the Town but of the homeowners. When the homeowner is working in their yard to dispose of yard waste or hauled to the transfer site where it is later chipped or burned.

The Town of Rome conducted a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in 2007. Within the CWPP, the curbside chipping program was identified as a community fuel reduction strategy to provide a convenient means of brush disposal for property owners.

Since the fall of 2008, the Town has conducted a chipping project each spring and fall targeting a different area. With the assistance of local Division of Forestry staff, the program is designed to identify community fuel reduction projects to provide a convenient means of brush disposal for property owners.

By the end of 2012, every property owner in Rome will have been made aware of the wildfire risk of the community they live or vacation in. The Town offered a homeowner grant program, received information from Firewise recommendations for preparing their homes for wildfires and had access to a convenient method for disposing of combustible vegetation fuels from their property (3,000 cubic yards to date).

Rome’s chipping program has been very effective and has received the acclaim that the Town is very likely to continue to implement in the future.

Spring is finally here! Wildfires happen during the month of March, April and May. After the snow-cover disappears, temperatures are usually higher. Wildfires are often a result of people burning brush or other debris. Debris burning, brush burning, barn burning and burning illegal trash, from time to time when another concerned citizen is more favorable.

Wildfires are a valuable resource. When an uncontrolled wildfire occurs, an economic, aesthetic, and cultural resource is threatened. Unfortunately trees can’t run for their lives.

Wildfires cost you Anyone found responsible for starting a wildfire faces fine for suppression costs. On average, the DNR tells soils over $100,000 in suppression costs to the public every year. While a small cost to a fire department, this is a substantial cost to us. Timber, this fuel can be carried more than 30 miles away from the fire front. A shiver of thousands of firebrands can be produced during a major wildfire event. If these firebrands land in areas with unmanaged fuels, such as piles of leaves or pine needles, numerous spot fires can start. Home damage caused from fire is not a small amount.

Be Ember Aware Firebrands are burning embers produced by wildfires which are blown high into the air and carried forward by the fire. Firebrands are one of the major causes of home fires during wildfires. Typical firebrand materials include things like pine cones and bark. Depending on wind speed and size of moment, firebrands can be carried more than ½ mile ahead of the fire front. A shiver of thousands of firebrands can be produced during a major wildfire event. If these firebrands land in areas with unmanaged fuels, such as piles of leaves or pine needles, numerous spot fires can start. Home damage caused from fire is not a small amount.

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