

# Wildland Fire Training – FREE

## DNR Cooperative Wildland Fire Training Program

The cooperative forest fire protection areas in Wisconsin rely on the local fire departments to provide wildland fire protection. In order to support these cooperative area fire departments, a comprehensive wildland fire training program has been initiated. Experienced DNR Wildland Fire Instructors have been traveling to cooperative area fire departments to instruct a wide range of wildland fire topics, free of charge.



Recently a new DNR wildland fire course has been developed and is available to requesting fire departments. The course, “Wildland Fire Simulation for Wisconsin Fire Departments,” is a comprehensive multiple problem solving exercise on different wildland fire scenarios. In each scenario, the fire department officers and firefighters role play operational roles and equipment to “solve” the wildland fire depicted. Topics such as first in reports, objective setting and tactical resource deployment are emphasized. This 3 hour course is offered in a single fire department training night at the fire station.

In addition, another comprehensive DNR wildland fire course, “Introduction to Wildland Fire Suppression for Wisconsin Fire Departments” (8 hours) is still being offered and is recognized as the entry level standard for wildland firefighters. Since 2005, this effort has trained 7000 firefighters in 250 fire departments across the cooperative fire protection areas of the state. Another DNR fire course, “Introduction to Structural Protection for Wisconsin Fire Departments” (3 hours) has been developed to assist fire departments in saving buildings and property during wildland fires. So far, an additional 50 fire departments involving 1000 firefighters have taken advantage of this worthwhile training.

If your fire department is interested in any of this FREE wildland fire training please contact Chris Klahn, DNR Cooperative Fire Management Specialist at (608) 297-2214 or e-mail christopher.klahn@wisconsin.gov .

# Power Line Fires



Trees and power lines can be a hazardous combination. Power utilities and electric cooperatives have over forty thousand miles of right-of-way in the state; many of those miles run through forested areas where the utility keeps a clear right-of-way.



Clear right-of-ways are needed to help ensure reliability of your electric service and also to allow line crews to get in to do work on the line. A few utilities own some of their right-of-way, but the vast majority holds some sort of easement for their lines to cross other property. These easements vary from just a ten foot wide swath cut across the landscape to a strip several hundred feet wide for high tension transmission lines. It is to the mutual benefit of the utilities and the public that power line rights-of-way be maintained to prevent both power outages and wildfires.



Trees cause about a third of all electric service interruptions. Many of these interruptions are attributed to standing dead trees and dead tops and limbs in live trees that come in contact with the line. Dead trees and limbs are simple to identify and should be removed if there is line-crossing potential.



Trees outside the right-of-way may need to be removed if they are dead, dying, or diseased and in danger of falling onto the power line. Defective and diseased trees or limbs can fall and cause broken conductors or short circuits on power lines. This may lead to a wildfire that risks the safety of people living near the power line and those who put the fire out.



Many things can cause a tree to become hazards. Wounds can be caused by animals, insects, lightning strikes, frost cracks, and damage during construction or tree harvest operations. Tree wounds can lead to the death of limbs or the entire tree. Leaning trees may become a hazard if the lean is extreme, caused by wind, saturated soils, or root rot. These types of leans often have a hump or soil mound at the base of the tree where the roots are being lifted out of the soil.



If you know of a tree that could be a hazard, call your local power utility or electric cooperative. Call before you cut down trees or tree limbs near electric lines. Touching a tree limb in contact with an electric line is extremely hazardous and life-threatening.

Let's work together to prevent forest fires and ensure safety around power lines.

## The Point of Origin

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# Point of Origin

Awareness begins in your community

Spring 2011

## Wildfire Season is Around the Corner— 2010 Lessons Learned

By Catherine Koele, Wildfire Prevention Specialist  
By Chris Klahn, Cooperative Fire Management Specialist

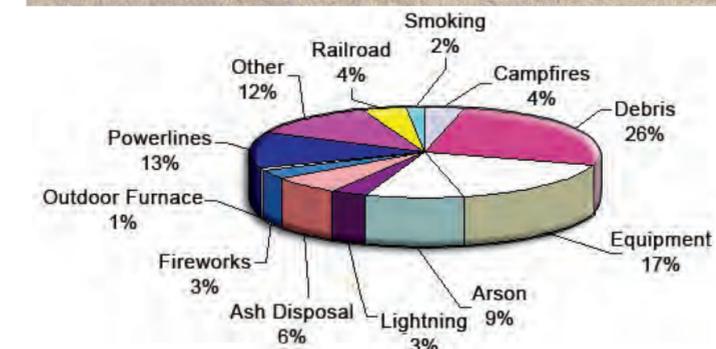
Wisconsin's traditional spring fire season begins when the snow-cover gradually melts in the southern portion of the state and slowly moves northward. The 2010 fire season started off a little different and both the DNR and fire departments found themselves chasing ignitions in early March when the entire state was completely snow-free. Numerous windy days coupled with low humidity and warmer temperatures resulted in above average fire potential.

detected and suppressed 1219 fires burning 2079 acres in DNR Protection areas. The DNR assisted fire departments on 32 of those Cooperative mutual aid fires for roughly 100 acres. Forty-four structures were lost and 440 structures were threatened and saved. A recent historical comparison shows the ten year average for DNR Protection areas is 1316 fires burning 2985 acres. In the Cooperative Fire Protection areas, fire departments suppressed approximately 1890 fires burning 4844 acres.

### 2010 Fire Season Summary

Wisconsin DNR fire control

Although debris burning continues...  
"Lessons" continued on page 4



### Wisconsin DNR Statewide Wildland Fire Causes 2010



ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT WILDFIRES.  
www.smokeybear.com

## Help Spring Green Up

If you would like to receive the Point of Origin via email please send your request to [stephanie.jones@wi.gov](mailto:stephanie.jones@wi.gov).



## From the Editors...

Our purpose is to provide you with information about the services, products, and direction of the Wisconsin DNR and the various partners in protection, referring specifically to wildfire prevention, suppression, and outreach. Building partnerships is the key to success!

If you have any comments, questions, or ideas for the newsletter, contact:  
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## Northland Area Builders Association (N.A.B.A.) Invites Firewise Wisconsin to the Table

By Marty Kasinskas, Wildland-Urban Interface Specialist  
— Northwest Region

The N.A.B.A. is a non-profit organization chartered in May, 1989 and composed of industry professionals united and dedicated to preserving and promoting safe and affordable housing for the people of Northwest Wisconsin.

Their members include builders, subcontractors, building suppliers and related businesses throughout Ashland, Bayfield, Burnett, Sawyer and Washburn Counties.

The partnership of the N.A.B.A. and Wisconsin Firewise

Communities will be initiated with a number of Industry Networking Nights and Trade Shows in Northwest Wisconsin.

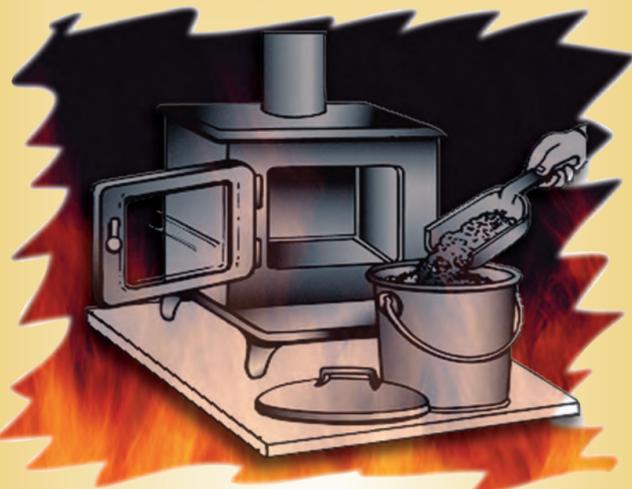
Through these meetings and shows the Firewise concept will filter down to the communities the N.A.B.A. serve in building remodeling and landscaping.

For more information about N.A.B.A. and Firewise Wisconsin check out their web site at

[northlandarebuilders.com](http://northlandarebuilders.com)



# Watch YOUR ashes



**Improper ash disposal has become an increasingly common cause of wildfires in recent years.** Wood ash is excellent insulation and can keep embers smoldering for a long time. When ashes are dumped outside, it only takes a slight breeze to blow away the ash and expose the embers, ultimately providing a heat source that can easily ignite dry vegetation that is abundant in the spring. The resulting wildfires generally occur in close proximity to buildings, putting people and their homes at risk. What can you do to prevent wildfires starting from wood ash?

- Do not assume the ashes are cold** and pour them onto the ground (even into a hole) where leaves can blow onto them or the wind can stir up sparks.
- Dispose of wood ashes in a steel bucket or garbage can** that can be tightly closed, douse with water, place the closed container outside your home away from combustible materials and leave in the container for several days before dumping them.
- Do not place hot ashes in a dumpster** where there are other combustible materials.
- Do not dispose of ashes in plastic, paper, or cardboard containers.** It doesn't take much heat for these types of containers to melt or ignite.
- Once you are sure your container of ashes is "cold," spread the ash on bare ground,** such as a tilled garden or plowed field. Spreading your ashes just after dark will allow you to spot any hot, glowing embers which may still be in the ash.
- Teach other family members about the dangers associated with hot ash disposal.**

## Let's Talk...

### Point of Origin Speaks

Interviews by Amy Luebke, Wildland-Urban Interface Specialist – West-Central Region



Snug Harbor Firewise Committee members look at hazards around homes.

Communication in our Association is really well organized. People have become aware of the risk of wildfire through the presentation, our newsletter, and our website.

**What do you feel will be the biggest challenge to getting Snug Harbor homeowners to adopt Firewise practices around their homes?**

Snug Harbor is a vacation area. People coming up to

their properties on the weekend may not be inclined to spend their time working around the yard, although some of us love getting out and working in the woods.

**What is your first priority for a Firewise project in Snug Harbor?**

One of our projects this year involves reducing the amount of fuel around the Association's garage by having pine trees within a 30 foot radius of the building removed. This will mean an increased likelihood of the garage surviving should a wildfire occur. We will also be having the tree tops left on the ground in the common area after a pine plantation thinning removed. This will widen the firebreak provided by the road as well as reduce the hazard to nearby homes.

**What has been the reaction to Snug Harbor's commitment to preparing for wildfire from Association members?**

People know about the fire danger and everyone is really motivated to address the issues. We have hazard mitigation funds and volunteer hours to really get started and start making a difference in our community. We are anxious to show people that we are moving forward and working to keep the area green and fire free.

*The Point of Origin spoke with Fire Chief John Frantz of the Rome Fire Department on 2/24/11 about his impressions regarding the Town's Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which was adopted in 2007, and the success of the Firewise Community USA Program.*

**Was there a catalyst that led to the Town of Rome developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)?**

Yes, the Cottonville Fire.

**Rome adopted its CWPP in 2007. How has implementation of the plan been going over the last 3+ years?**

It's been moving forward at an acceptable pace. There are still a lot of things that have to be done but at least it's moving forward and not moving backwards.

**How have residents and property owners reacted to the Town's commitment to wildfire readiness?**

It's been very positive. People are very aware of the dangers and have been very cooperative.

We send out letters (offering free yard debris chipping services) and get 20-25% of the people to participate in chipping projects. The hardest thing is helping people understand the project guidelines. It would be great if the Town could afford to have brush clean up for the whole community.

**Have you seen a reduction in the number of wildfires since the Town adopted its CWPP?**

Chief Frantz: Yes, we've seen that people are more aware of the hazards and fire calls are down because of that. The CWPP has really been a prevention tool. Fewer fires are occurring because people are now more aware of the danger.

**What challenges does the Town face in terms of mitigating the risk of damage to structures?**

Chief Frantz: The biggest challenge is that this is a recreational community. Half the homes are seasonal and there are many retired folks as well. It's hard for them to get out and get the work done. Where there aren't homes, there are many empty lots. Better than 60% of the town is undeveloped.

**What advice would you offer other communities in high fire risk areas?**

Chief Frantz: I would advise them to do an assessment of their community, determine what they can control and take a posi-



Chief John Frantz, Rome Fire Department

tive approach to the implementation of their plan.

**What do you think about the three local lake associations (Lakes Camelot, Arrowhead and Sherwood) that have achieved and maintained Firewise Community USA recognition?**

Chief Frantz: I think it's fantastic. It was a program that was brought to those communities even before we started the CWPP. The Firewise programs have blossomed to more involvement. All in all it's been a positive experience in our community.

## Lessons

continued from front

tinues to be the number one cause of wildfires in Wisconsin, reports show that these fires noticeably decreased by a total of 21% against a 10-year average.

As the number of debris fires continues to decrease, improper **ash disposal and outdoor wood boiler fires are on the rise.** More and more homeowners are installing alternative and economical heat sources and with government incentives, wood for fuel seems to be trend.

In 2010 alone, **119 fires were caused by people carelessly throwing hot ashes in dry litter or by sparks from chimney stacks.** These types of fires spike when the temperatures drop in early spring and the ground has little to no snow-cover. Through education efforts, such as tax bill inserts, press releases and radio announcements, the DNR hopes to bring attention to the problem and provide information on safe practices.

## Burning Permit System Updates

To check the daily burning restrictions, nearly 200,000 calls were directed to the toll-free number [1-888-WIS-BURN] and over 600,000 glances at the web option [dnr.wi.gov/wisburn] occurred. Thus, nearly one million fire prevention contacts were made as a result of the continued success of the phone and Internet-based burning permit system.

With the new and more user friendly burning permit system put in place in the last few years, there have been recent efforts to further increase the convenience of

obtaining the written burning permit. Customers are now able to call the DNR General Information line and have permits issued by customer service representatives; permits will then be mailed or instantly emailed. This strategy provides easier accessibility for seasonal residents and as well as an option for customers when DNR offices are routinely closed or Emergency Fire Wardens are unavailable.

## In Summary...

Overall, the new burning permit system is proving to be a suc-

cess and the DNR will continue to pursue enhancements such as testing an online self-issued annual burning permit and the expansion of the fire danger rating system adjective levels in our Cooperative Areas to allow for statewide coverage. With recent snow falls, most of Wisconsin is entering the 2011 fire season with normal precipitation and soil moisture conditions. However, history has shown that Wisconsin weather can change on a dime. For the continued up-to-date fire conditions and burning permit restrictions, visit:

[dnr.wi.gov/wisburn](http://dnr.wi.gov/wisburn)

