Living With Wildfire
A Homeowner’s Guide
Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Co-Op
Partners in Fire

Living With Wildfire: A Homeowner’s Guide
Revised in November, 2008 by:
First American Title Insurance Company of Oregon
and
The Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Co-Op
Serving Jackson & Josephine Counties
www.rvfpc.com

Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Co-Op
Life in Fire Country
Southwest Oregon is an area where fire has always played a prominent role in the environment. Long before towns and subdivisions were established across the landscape, fires were a natural result of the frequent summer thunderstorms that traveled across the region. However, nearly a century of fire suppression has resulted in a buildup of fuel loads, creating conditions that have the potential to create catastrophic wildfires.

Within this natural fire environment there are individual homes, subdivisions, and entire communities. Many existing homes however, would be unable to survive an intense wildfire. Since it is not a question of “if” wildfires will occur but “when” they will occur, the likelihood of human life and property loss is great and growing. This booklet will help the private landowner to be better prepared for living with wildfire.

Meet Your “Neighbors”
If you are living in the forestlands of Southern Oregon you are likely a neighbor of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service or the State of Oregon. The lands within the state are generally laid out in a “checkerboard” pattern, alternatingly divided between private and government interests. While we may know where property lines fall, Mother Nature does not. Wildfire, flood, and insect or noxious weed infestations move freely and quickly without regard to property boundaries.

It is therefore vital that private landowners get to know their federal or state “neighbors” and become familiar with the topography and ecology of adjoining property. Federal lands, managed by the BLM and the Forest Service, serve many interests that range from the development and maintenance of recreational facilities, to the harvesting of timber resources and the preservation of wildlife habitat. By familiarizing yourself with the activities that are in effect or that are planned for lands near your property, you will be better prepared to anticipate the risks to your family and your property from hazards, including fire.

The Realities of Wildland Firefighting
A lot of people assume that when a wildfire starts, it will be quickly controlled and extinguished. This is an accurate assumption 97% of the time. Firefighters have the ability, equipment and technology to effectively suppress most wildfires. But 3% of the time wildfires burn so intensely that there is little firefighters can do.

Extreme weather, limited access, and dry, overgrown forests can make fire suppression difficult. Wildfires in multiple locations can easily strain available local fire protection resources, both structural and wildland. The odds are stacked against you if your home is far from a road, surrounded by dense underbrush, limited by inadequate access due to a steep or narrow driveway, or is without adequate water supply to combat the flames.
The Fire Environment

Firefighters recognize three components of the fire environment: weather, topography and fuel loads. These components affect the likelihood of a fire starting, the speed and direction at which wildfire will travel, the intensity at which a wildfire burns, and the ability to control and extinguish a wildfire. Although weather and topography cannot be changed, the fuel (or vegetation) loads can be modified. Consequently, many of our opportunities to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire lie in proper management and manipulation of vegetation.

Weather

Summer thunderstorms and dry, hot or windy weather all increase the likelihood of a major wildfire. These conditions make ignition easier, allow fuels to burn more rapidly and increase fire intensity. High wind speeds, in particular, can transform a small fire into a catastrophic event in a matter of minutes.

Topography

Of topographic features, the steepness of slope most influences fire behavior. As the steepness of slope increases, the rate of fire spread increases. Aspect, defined as the angle of the sun’s rays to the slope, adds significantly to the fire hazard. South and southwest facing slopes, which face the sun’s rays more directly, are usually drier and warmer and consequently exhibit a statistically higher incidence of fire. Steep, narrow drainages or canyons act like funnels and accelerate wind speeds—which can radically increase the rate of fire spread. Winds blowing over mountain peaks can accelerate on the downside, generating turbulent gusts that whip up firebrands and distribute them long distances, thereby creating new hot spots.

Fuel

Fuel is required for any fire to burn. In regard to wildfire, fuels almost always consist of living vegetation (trees, shrubs, grass and weeds) and dead plant material (dead trees, dried grass, fallen branches, pine needles, etc.). Houses, when involved in a wildfire, become a source of fuel. The amount, size, moisture content, arrangement and other fuel characteristics influence ease of ignition, rate of fire spread, length of flames produced and other fire behaviors.

The Human Environment

With more people living in high fire-hazard settings, the human-built environment becomes an important factor in predicting the loss of life and property. Untreated wood shake or shingle roofs, narrow roads, limited access, lack of fire-wise landscaping, inadequate water supplies, poorly planned subdivisions and overgrown vegetation are factors that present increased risks to people living in forested areas, and to fire fighters.
Structural Versus Wildland Fire Protection

Fire protection for dwellings on rural farms or forested lands is different from that in urban areas. Most homes are located within or contract with a rural fire protection district for structural fire protection. Landowners not provided formal protection are strongly encouraged to perform additional fire safety measures beyond the minimum requirements.

Various county, state and federal agencies respond to protect their respective lands when wildfire threatens. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) provides wildland fire suppression efforts to private properties in the state. Southwest Oregon is fortunate, in that we possess some unique and valuable mutual aid agreements with a variety of fire agencies, so that resources can be sent where needed most.

Protecting our forests during a wildfire is a big job that is dependent upon the resources of heavy equipment and countless dedicated firefighters. Fire suppression efforts may utilize the following resources in their battle with wildfire:

- Fire engines and tenders
- ODF or federal permanent and seasonal firefighters
- A force of wildfire management professionals
- Contracted firefighter forces
- Land machinery such as bulldozers
- Water-dropping helicopters
- Retardant planes
- Crews and equipment for structural protection

Fire Suppression Components

Forest management and wildfire management are integrally tied together. Elements of fire management can include planning, prevention, education, fuels management including fire use, detection, initial attack, fire suppression, containment, monitoring, smoke management, investigation and cost recovery.

All fires in Oregon are investigated to determine specific causes. In fires where property owner negligence is involved, or in fires resulting from logging operations, ODF collects the funds from fines to replace landowner and state taxpayer dollars spent on fire fighting costs.

People remain the leading cause of most fires. **On the average, about 68 percent of all wildfires are human-caused.** Lightning and other natural causes are responsible for the remainder.

Some wildfire statistics for ODF-protected lands in Jackson & Josephine Counties from 1998 to 2007:

- Average number of wildfires per year: 210
- Average acres burned by wildfires per year: 5,155
- Average annual budget for suppressing wildfires per year: $5 million
Fuels Affect Fire Behavior
Overgrown forest vegetation is often present at varying heights, similar to the rungs of a ladder. Under these conditions, flames from fuels burning at ground level, such as a thick layer of pine needles or grass, can be carried to shrubs which can ignite still higher fuels like tree branches. Vegetation that allows a fire to move from lower growing plants to taller ones is referred to as ladder fuel.

Crown fires occur when a ladder of vegetation allows fire to climb to the tops of pine and fir trees. Crown fires kill trees. Flames from these infernos can jump 100 or more feet high and send burning embers more than a mile away. Therefore, reducing ladder fuels is vital for a fire-resilient forest. Ladder fuels can be removed by providing a separation between the vegetation layers. This can be accomplished by thinning and pruning. Ladder fuels are especially dangerous around homes, but pose a risk anywhere a fire might start. See page 10 for suggestions in reducing ladder fuels.

Depending upon the vegetation, its density and its proximity to ladder fuels, a wildfire can travel and spread at a great rate of speed. For instance; assuming a wind speed of 20 mph, flat terrain, typical moisture content for summertime, and normal August weather conditions for our southwestern region of Oregon, you might witness the following fire characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fuel</th>
<th>Flame length</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Acres burned / hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dense Conifer Forest</td>
<td>9 feet</td>
<td>.5 mph</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Pine Forest</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>1.5 mph</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasslands</td>
<td>8 feet</td>
<td>4.5 mph</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Brush</td>
<td>22 feet</td>
<td>6.5 mph</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fire Suppression Tactics
Depending upon flame length, firefighters employ different tactics to combat a blaze. If the flames are less than 4 feet in length, a fireline can be effectively constructed at the front of the fire with shovels and axes. If the flames measure between 4 and 8 feet, bulldozers and other heavy equipment may be needed to construct an effective fireline. Where bulldozers are unavailable, fire engines with hoses and water might be used to “knock down” the flames before the fire crews with hand tools can work. If this equipment is unavailable or the terrain makes access to the fireline impossible, a line would be built farther away.

Flames from 8 to 11 feet in length are often fought with air tankers with fire suppressing retardant or helicopters with water, as ground fire suppression efforts become ineffective. Firefighters typically retreat to existing roads, streams and other open areas for safety. “Burn out” tactics between the fireline and the advancing fire front may be used to eliminate fuel for the fire. And, when safe, some naturally-caused fires may be allowed to burn in wilderness areas, rather than applying full suppression tactics.
Public Regulated Use Closures
Each year the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) assesses local weather and forest conditions to determine the beginning of fire season. Many factors are considered in making this decision, including rainfall, the amount of moisture retention in fuels on the forest floors, and weather patterns. Often, our fire season will run into the autumn months. ODF imposes degrees of limitations on outdoor activities that are statistically proven to cause fires to ignite. The degree of closure varies from no restriction to certain times of the day, to a full and complete closure of particular outdoor activities altogether.

These closures, referred to as the Public Use Regulated Closure, pertain to all private and state lands, except for some incorporated cities. Activities that are regulated include chain saw use, burning, mowing, off-road vehicle use and smoking. Read further for more information, but always call ODF for specific questions about specific closures in your area. Call 664-3328 in Jackson County, 474-3152 in Josephine County, or go to www.swofire.oregon.gov.

In addition to closure regulations at the state level, there are closures that affect federal lands, and commercial activities. Landowners are responsible for knowing which regulations apply to their activities, how to get updates on restrictions, and the penalties that can be assessed. Members of the public visiting forested areas such as parks, campgrounds or National Forest recreation sites should be familiar with and adhere to all fire-related restrictions. Call the nearest Forest Service Ranger Station for more information, or go to www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou.

Regulated Commercial Activities
Commercial operations, which require permits and inspections, must comply with closures that pertain to their professional activities. Commercial operators are required by law to have fire suppression equipment on site, and special training in order to operate during the fire season.

The Industrial Fire Precaution Level (IFPL) applies to commercial operators, whether engaged in forest or agricultural activities. The IFPL is ranked in stages, ranging from 1 to 4 depending upon weather conditions. Each successively higher number further restricts the type of work permitted and the hours of operation allowed.

Commercial Use of Chain Saws
All operators of chain saws are required by law to have the following equipment on site while operating chainsaws:

- an 8 oz. or larger fire extinguisher
- a round pointed shovel which has a face not less than 10 inches wide and a handle not less than 26 inches long
- an approved spark arrester screen on the saw’s exhaust system

Before starting a chain saw, it must be moved at least 20 feet away from the point where the saw was fueled. A fire watch is required after the completion of each day’s work for at least one hour and as much as three hours as determined by ODF as conditions warrant. Cutting, welding and grinding of metal is prohibited through the same process as chain saw use, based on time of day and vegetation conditions as fire season progresses.
Fire Season Regulations

Regulated Activities During Fire Season

**Use of Mowers**

The operating hours for the non-agricultural mowing of dry grass, including gas-powered string trimmers is regulated in the same manner as chain saw use. Green irrigated lawns do not fall under these regulations. Agricultural use pertains to the commercial growing and harvesting of crops on lands zoned as agricultural. Electric-powered string trimmers do not fall under these restrictions; however power cords should be in good condition.

**Camp Fires**

Camp fires, including charcoal fires, cooking fires and warming fires are prohibited, except at designated campgrounds such as county and state parks. However, portable cooking stoves using liquefied or bottled fuels are allowed. A list of designated campgrounds is available from ODF, BLM and USFS offices. Note that special regulations apply on the Wild and Scenic corridor of the Rogue River (questions should be directed to the Bureau of Land Management at 471-6500).

**Off Road Vehicle Use**

Use of motorized vehicles, including motorcycles and ATVs is prohibited except on improved roads. “Improved road” means a road maintained for use by passenger cars and which is clear of flammable vegetation and debris. Direct any questions to your local Forest Service, BLM or ODF office.

**Smoking**

During Fire Season, smoking is prohibited in forested areas. While traveling, smoking is allowed only in enclosed vehicles on improved roads. Special regulations apply on the Wild and Scenic corridor of the Rogue River.

**Open Burning**

During the summer and fall, showers occur that can give a false sense of security as to the degree of fire danger. Forest vegetation can dry quickly and return to its previous state of flammability. Therefore, burning is always prohibited until a significantly wet weather pattern is established and the end of fire season has been officially declared.

All open burning is prohibited at the declaration of Fire Season. Burn barrel use varies by location, so call your nearest fire district or ODF to confirm which regulations apply. It is recommended that debris intended for burning be piled and covered with plastic until Fire Season has officially ended and continued fire-safe weather conditions are present. Several smaller piles versus one large pile add to the margin of safety. Always burn safely! You could be held liable for an escaped fire at any time during the year. See page 12 for more burn information.
Wildland/Urban Interface Zones

More and more people are moving into forested areas to build a home and live. This trend is especially evident within the western states and specifically in the Southern Oregon region where summer wildfires can quickly threaten these homes. Federal and state land managers have labeled this area where human habitation co-mingles with natural forestland, the Wildland/Urban Interface, or WUI.

The Oregon Department of Forestry works closely with communities in high-risk, wildland/urban interface areas. By making homes in wildland areas not just fire-resistant, but more compatible with the environment in which they are sited, fewer people have to suffer the devastating loss of a home. In the state of Oregon, there are more than 240,000 homes worth a combined total of over $6.5 billion within these high-risk areas. (ODF 2005)

Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act

The Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act (often referred to as Senate Bill 360) enlists the aid of rural property owners in making rural home sites less dangerous, so that firefighters may more safely and effectively defend homes from wildfires. Basically, the law requires property owners in identified forestland-urban interface areas to reduce excess vegetation around structures and along driveways. The Oregon Department of Forestry supplies information about the Act’s fuel reduction standards to forestland-urban interface property owners, and provides a mail-in card for self certification, once fuel reduction standards have been met. Returning the card to ODF is an important step, since certification relieves a property owner from the Act’s fire cost-recovery liability.

Self-certification is valid for five years, at which time a renewal card is mailed out by ODF. The only exceptions are on properties that are sold, and on properties on which a structure is added. At these times, a new certification card is required to be requested from ODF, then signed by the property owner and returned to the department when the fuel reduction standards are met. Contact your local ODF office for further information.

The Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act empowers the state to collect up to $100,000 in suppression costs from a WUI landowner if three criteria are met and the self-certification card was not returned to the state:

1. A wildland fire originates on the owner’s property.
2. The fire spreads within the protection zone around a structure and driveway that does not meet the fuel-reduction standards.
3. Oregon Department of Forestry incurs extraordinary costs to suppress the fire.

The cost collection may be greater than $100,000 if a WUI landowner is found to be negligent in the origin of the fire.

While this Act is not currently in effect in every county in the state, it is required in Jackson and Josephine Counties. Call ODF to determine if you are located in the forestland-urban interface and for information about how to comply with the Act’s fuel reduction standards.
County Regulations Regarding Fire

Jackson County Fire Safety Requirements
All new structures proposed for construction within Jackson County’s “Hazardous Wildfire Area” are subject to certain standards which will help increase the chance of survival during a wildfire. Areas within the county that are subject to these standards generally have slopes and/or vegetation types conducive to wildfire hazard. To determine if your home or proposed project lies within the Wildfire Area, view the GIS department’s map on the county website at www.smartmap.org.

All structures that require building permits within the mapped area are required to develop fuelbreaks around the structure, have non-flammable roofing material, and driveway access that will accommodate large fire apparatus. Go to www.jacksoncounty.org and click on “Wildfire Safety.”

Josephine County Land Use Code, Article 76
Article 76 was passed in 2005 to help reduce the risk of a private home burning in a wildfire. The wildfire and emergency service safety standards within Article 76 are completed under a self-certification process.

Article 76 addresses the following issues: access, signage, slope, construction materials, fire safety zones and fire service protection. Though a brief outline of requirements under Article 76 follows, it is recommended that you speak with an official in the County Planning Office for further information, or you can visit their website for further details at www.co.josephine.or.us/wildfire/.

Emergency Vehicle Access
In order for emergency vehicles to access rural property, both Jackson and Josephine counties have set standards that must be met when new construction is proposed. The counties may impose additional standards as needed to assure safe access. These standards concern issues that include:

Address signs, which must be installed at the driveway entrance, with other restrictions on size, directional arrows, etc.

Driveway construction standards include surface width, nearness to buildings, steepness or grade of driveway, minimum curve radius, length of drive, vertical and side vegetation clearances, drive construction weight loads, turnouts and turnarounds, gates, culverts and bridges, and surface transitions.

Home Sites and Building Materials
Construction materials can also reduce the chance of a home becoming fuel for wildfire. Both counties prohibit wood shake roofing on new construction in the Wildland/Urban Interface. Other requirements address chimney safety, soffit vents and deck enclosures.

There are also standards for safer homesites that include slopes, firewood storage, and Fire Safety Zones. These help constitute a home’s Defensible Space.
Defensible Space
Defensible space is the area between a house and an oncoming wildfire where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the wildfire threat and to provide an opportunity for firefighters to effectively defend the house. Sometimes, a defensible space is simply a homeowner’s properly maintained backyard. More often it includes the modification of vegetation around the entire home, the proper maintenance of roofs and gutters and the removal of leaves and debris from the yard.

Both Jackson and Josephine counties have requirements to provide and maintain a 100-foot fuel break around all new construction. These local guidelines, endorsed by all of the rural and metro fire districts in our region, are more stringent than the state’s Senate Bill 360 requirements, but provide for a larger margin of safety for homes situated within the Wildland Urban Interface. Defensible space tactics have been proven to protect homes across the nation, as this photo of the 2005 Deer Creek Fire in Josephine County illustrates.

Fuelbreaks
A 100-foot fuelbreak shall be developed and maintained around all new construction. Certain site characteristics such as slope may necessitate a larger fuelbreak. Check with your county planning office. Fuelbreaks shall address the following:

1. Dead plant materials are removed, including dead branches on living trees, and fallen vegetation that isn’t significantly decomposed.
2. Vegetation is thinned to remove ladder fuels and to break up continuous vegetation, with trees limbed up to a height of 10 feet or one-third the height of the tree.
3. Grass is kept to a height of less than 6 inches in Jackson County and under 4 inches in Josephine County.
4. Vegetation is pruned and maintained so that no branches overhang a roofline, and a 10-foot (Jackson) or 15-foot (Josephine) clearance is provided between stovetop/chimneys and branches.
5. Firewood piles or woodsheds must be at least 30 feet from all other structures.
6. Juniper and other highly combustible shrubbery should be removed or replaced with “Fire-wise” vegetation. Go to www.firewise.org to learn more about fire resistant landscaping.

Ladder Fuels
Within the defensible space area, a vertical separation of three times the height of the lower fuel layer is recommended. For example, if a shrub growing adjacent to a large pine tree is three feet tall, the recommended separation distance would be nine feet. This could be accomplished by removing the lower tree branches, reducing the height of the shrub, or both. The shrub could also be removed or replaced with a fire-resistant species.
DID YOU KNOW:
Over 90% of homes that burn in wildfires across our nation burn because of small spot-fires or flying embers that ignite the home, not because of crown fires. Creating a “defensible space” may not prevent a home’s ignitability, either! As a homeowner, you must consider YOUR HOME as part of the FUEL. And, “if it’s attached to the house, it’s part of the house!”

The Home Ignition Zone primarily determines a home’s ignition potential. The HIZ includes the home & immediate surroundings outward up to 200 ft. The Home Ignition Zone is site-specific. A 5-point review of your home & it’s surroundings will help you determine how to make your home more likely to survive a wildfire. The Concept: Strive for discontinuous fuels to your house!

5 HOME ASSESSMENT STEPS:
1. OVERVIEW OF SURROUNDINGS:
   How is the structure positioned in relationship to severe fire behavior?
   Peaks, ridges, setbacks, slopes, aspect, fuels buildup?
   Type of construction? Wood frame, stucco walls, etc.

2. PEAK TO EAVES:
   Gutters – present? Noncombustible?
   Litter on roof, in gutters and crevices?
   Inspect the roof – noncombustible? Shingles missing? Shingles flat with no gaps?

3. EAVES TO FOUNDATION:
   Attic, eave, soffit vents and crawl space – secure? Can embers enter? Litter or trash?
   Walls and attachments – noncombustible? Can litter collect?
   Decks – combustible materials? Condition? Skirting or siding beneath? Vegetation or litter below? Overhanging branches?
   Fences - attached to the house? Materials-wood or metal? Adjacency to other homes or buildings? Litter collecting?
   Flammable material next to or under the structure? Firewood stacked next to home, debris beneath decks, etc.
   Combustible materials near or on the structure where walls meet roof or decking surfaces? Outdoor furniture pads on deck? Fiber door mat in front of wood door?
   Nooks, crannies other small spaces? Clean, protected?

4. FOUNDATION TO IMMEDIATE LANDSCAPED AREA:
   Landscaped (managed) vegetation – Firewise landscaping zones? Separation distances?
   Ladder fuels? Maintenance? Plant selection appropriate?
   Propane tanks? Large tanks in the open? Smaller tanks away from structures?
   Vehicles, RVs, other motorized vehicles, out-buildings? Near home? In garage or parked on clean surface? Other structures have safe zones?

5. IMMEDIATE LANDSCAPED AREA TO EXTENT OF THE HOME IGNITION ZONE:
   Inspect vegetation clearance and crown separation. Are there areas of vegetation that could lead a surface fire to the immediate landscaped area?? Are there ladder fuels? Consider neighboring property vegetation as well and mitigate if necessary.
Open Burning

Open burning is tightly regulated in both Jackson and Josephine Counties. Many fire districts and cities require permits, and limit the days you are allowed to burn. Please call your local Fire District, or the appropriate phone number below to find out whether it is a burn day in your area, and what restrictions may apply:

**Jackson County:** 776-7007  
**Josephine County:** 476-9663

**NOTE:** NO OPEN or BARREL BURNING IS ALLOWED IN EITHER JACKSON or JOSEPHINE COUNTY DURING FIRE SEASON.

Open and barrel burning can contribute to air pollution in the Rogue Valley, particularly during air stagnation episodes. Please consider the alternatives to opening burning listed below. If you do decide to burn, it’s important to follow these guidelines:

**Open/barrel burning is prohibited...**

- Throughout Jackson County when the Ventilation Index (VI)* is below 400, or when other conditions exist that may lead to air stagnation.
- Throughout the Rogue Basin Open Burn Control Area in Josephine County when the Ventilation Index (VI)* is below 400, or when other conditions exist that may lead to air stagnation. Visit [www.co.josephine.or.us/Files/Burn_Control_Area_8x11.pdf](http://www.co.josephine.or.us/Files/Burn_Control_Area_8x11.pdf) for a map.
- Within the Air Quality Maintenance Area during November, December, January and February. Visit [www.smartmap.org/files/pdfs/maps/aqma.pdf](http://www.smartmap.org/files/pdfs/maps/aqma.pdf) to view a map of the AQMA.
- Within many incorporated cities in both counties. Call your local fire district to find out if burning is prohibited in your city, or if you need to get a special permit to burn.

*The VI is the National Weather Service’s indicator of the relative degree of air circulation for a specified area and time period. Basically, it is a measurement of the air's ability to “clean” itself.

**Alternatives to Open Burning**

**Chip tree limbs and branches:** Wood chips make a great landscape mulch material. Benefits include conserving soil moisture, reducing weeds, and cooling the soil. While wood chips make great pathways, remember: they are a source of fuel for fire, so intersperse with rock, pavers or gravel.

**Compost leaves:** Leaves are excellent for composting! If you don't want to compost but have leaves, sign up with the Leaf Exchange. The Leaf Exchange Program serves to connect people who want leaves for composting with people who need to get rid of leaves. Go to Jackson County Recycling Partnership for more information on composting.

**Biomass Recycling Companies:** Many companies throughout our region now accept woody debris and wood waste for recycling. Biomass One in White City, for example, uses the wood waste as a primary fuel to generate electricity. Other companies mix yard debris and clippings with bio-solids to produce compost. More and more options for woody waste recycling are becoming available locally. Check your phone book for a company in your area, or visit the air quality page on your county’s website.
When a Fire is Approaching

Most fire seasons in the Rogue Valley include a period of extreme fire danger. When wildfire threatens, **DON’T STAY AND TRY TO FIGHT THE FIRE!** Fire conditions may become explosive without warning.

Should your house be threatened by a wildfire, you may be advised to evacuate by a fire or law enforcement official. Homeowners have the legal right to stay on their property as long as their activities do not hinder firefighting efforts. If you are not able to evacuate safely, the following may be useful to help you and your home survive:

1. Evacuate, if possible, all family members and pets. Review your family evacuation plan and meeting place. Contact friends or relatives once you have reached safety.

2. Wear long cotton pants and long-sleeved shirt, and leather gloves and boots. Also have protection for your nose and mouth: a cotton handkerchief or dust mask, water, hardhat and goggles.

3. Place vehicles in the garage, pointing out, and roll up the windows. Be sure to park where you will not interfere with any emergency vehicle if you need to leave in a hurry. Place valuable papers and mementos in the car. Close garage door, leaving it unlocked. Disconnect electric door opener. Place patio furniture inside.

4. Fill bathtubs, sinks, trash cans, buckets, and other containers with water. Soak rags and towels for beating out embers and small fires.

5. Close all interior and exterior doors, windows and vents.

6. Close the fireplace damper and place a screen over the hearth.

7. Remove lightweight non-fire-resistant curtains. Close fire-resistant window coverings. Attach pre-cut plywood panels to the exterior side of windows and glass doors. Move furniture to the center of each room and leave the light on.

8. Turn off pilot lights. Shut off propane at the tank, or natural gas at the meter.

9. Prop a metal ladder against the house so that firefighters have easy access to the roof. Keep wood shake or shingle roofs moist. Place a sprinkler on the roof, but do not turn on until embers begin to fall on the roof.

10. Attach garden hoses to faucets and attach a nozzle set on spray.

11. If a fire should occur within the house, call 9-1-1. Then solicit help from neighbors to fight the fire until firefighters arrive. Go outside if you can’t immediately put the fire out. Most importantly, **STAY CALM!**

12. Remember, prior planning pays off. Have a family evacuation plan in place, and update it annually!
In case of a wildfire, would you or someone you love:

- Need special notification about the need for evacuation?
- Need extra time to safely leave home during an evacuation?
- Need outside help to safely leave their home?

There are steps you can take to help ensure that everyone remains safe.

**Sign up for the Disaster Registry.** The Disaster Registry is a computer program which includes maps and GPS services, and is used by emergency planners and emergency workers to locate and help people who need special assistance during a disaster. It won’t guarantee that you’ll get help first, but it can make it easier for emergency workers to get you or your loved ones the specialized help you need when a disaster strikes. For more information call the Rogue Valley Council of Governments at (541) 664-6674. You can visit [www.rvcog.org](http://www.rvcog.org) and click on “Disaster Registry” on the left side to apply online or print a form.

**Plan ahead.** Talk to your neighbors about ways they may be able to help you. If you require special methods of notification, make sure that at least two people who are able to communicate with you will keep you informed. If you require special transportation, keep that phone number with your other emergency phone numbers and have a back-up transportation provider’s number on the same list. Plan two different places where you could go when you evacuate, and add that information to your emergency contact list.

**Keep a small kit always packed.** Include essential clothing, snacks, water, toothpaste and brush, etc. Keep with the kit a list of things to add at the last minute (medicines, mobility aids, etc.) Also include a list with contact information for your family, friends, and physicians.

**Consider leaving early,** even if an evacuation has not been ordered yet. Time is precious. You may have to wait for transportation. Smokey conditions may make health problems worse. You may have to make special arrangements for service animals or pets. Don’t gamble with your life!

**Assist with fire prevention activities around the house,** including brush clearing, tree trimming, and mowing grass. Trim trees that overhang decks and chimneys, and move firewood to a safe storage location away from other fuels. Ensure that there is enough clearance for emergency vehicles to use the driveway. Make sure that your friends or loved ones have working smoke detectors, and encourage them to check their smoke detectors every year. Finally, talk with them now, before an emergency strikes, about what they would do if a wildfire approached their home.