

As warmer weather approaches, fire officials say now is the time to take steps to make your home Firewise.

“Most of the techniques to increase the chances of your home surviving a wildfire can be accomplished with a weekend of work,” said Brian Daunt, acting fire management officer for the Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands. “Tree thinning on and around your property, using construction materials on your home that are fire-resistant or noncombustible, and clearing dead wood and dense vegetation at least 30 feet from your home are a few low-costs ways that you can help protect your property. Now is the time to take action, not when smoke is in the air,” he said.

The Firewise Communities Program works to recognize and motivate communities to take action to protect their homes and natural surroundings from catastrophic fire by creating or improving survivable space. By applying Firewise practices, homeowners can take action to reduce the risk of losing their homes and property to wildfires without fire department intervention.

A few tips are listed below for homeowners to reduce risks to their homes and property, and more can be viewed on the Firewise website www.firewise.org.

- Clear needles, leaves, and other debris from gutters, roof surfaces, porches, and decks. This eliminates receptive fuel beds which prevents embers from igniting your home.
- Keep lawns watered and mowed to less than 4 inches high. Grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.
- Remove flammable materials within 3-5 feet of the home’s foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch fire, don’t let it touch the house, deck, or porch. Also remove vegetation and debris from under decks and along fences.
- Limit vegetation surrounding the home’s perimeter for 30-100 feet depending on the terrain, construction materials, and vegetation type.

“Preparedness is important, and if dry conditions persist, the potential exists for an active fire season to start early and continue late through the summer,” said Daunt.