Steps to Becoming a Firewise Community

Step 1 Contact Virginia Department of Forestry

Becoming recognized as a Firewise Community/USA begins with the community itself.

Step 2 Site Visit

A Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) representative will schedule a visit to assess the community.

Step 3 Form a Firewise Committee

A Firewise committee can include homeowners, fire professionals, and/or members of other interest groups.

Step 4 Create a Plan

The community, VDOF and other partners will use the assessment as the basis for creating a plan that contains agreed-upon, area-specific solutions to its wildfire issues. Full development of the Firewise plan may take several months.

Step 5 Sponsor an Event

A Firewise Day must be held each year to maintain recognition status. Firewise Days can include chipping days, public awareness events, brush clearing or other activities.

Step 6 Minimum Investment

Each community is required to invest the equivaletn of one volunteer hour per dwelling unit in wildfire risk reduction activities annually.

Step 7 Recognition

Firewise USA site recognition is achieved after completing the above steps and an application is submitted and approved. Your VDOF mitigation specialist will help with this process.

Step 8 Renewing Your Recognition Status

A yearly renewal is required, which is an easy on-line process.

A Disaster Plan

The time to plan for any emergency is prior to the event.

- ✓ Create your own action plan.
- ✓ Prepare a "GO Kit."
- ✓ Post local emergency telephone numbers in a visible place.
- ✓ Leave before it's too late. Decide where you will go and how you will get there. Two escape routes out of your home and out of your neighborhood are preferable.
- ✓ Have a plan for your pets.
- ✓ Practice family fire drills.

When wildfire conditions exist, evacuations can occur without notice; be ready to take action.

For More Information

For more information about VDOF services or programs, please contact your local Virginia Department of Forestry office or visit:

www.dof.virginia.gov

Western Region Office, Salem:
Phone: (540) 387-5461

Central Region Office, Charlottesville:
Phone: (434) 977-5193

Eastern Region Office, Providence Forge:
Phone: (804) 966-5092

Virginia Department of Forestry
900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 800
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903
Phone: (434) 977-6555
www.dof.virginia.gov

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Firewise Communities for Virginia

Reduce the Wildfire Risk to Your Community!

www.firewisevirginia.org

Virginia Department of Forestry

Protect Your Community

From the beauty of the landscape to the privacy and quiet, the benefits of living in one of Virginia's forested areas are numerous and varied. Yet, with that high quality of life comes the risk of wildland fire.

Dry leaves, pine needles, dead tree limbs and flammable plants serve as the fuel for fires in communities such as yours. But there are several steps you can take to reduce the risk to you and your neighbors. By becoming "Firewise," you and your community will ensure that the quality of life you enjoy today will be there tomorrow.

Please take a few moments to read the material within this pamphlet, and share it with your neighbors. By following these guidelines, you will make your home and your neighbors' a Firewise community.

Emergency Access

Identify your home and neighborhood with legible and clearly marked street names and numbers so response vehicles can rapidly find the location of the emergency. Include a driveway that is at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet – to provide access to emergency vehicles.

Firefighters Need Your Help

Is Your Home Firewise?

Firewise Landscaping

Fires in the wildland/urban interface are becoming more common as people choose to live in previously undeveloped areas. The vegetation in these areas often consists of trees, shrubs and grasses that are very flammable.

Firewise landscaping reduces the home's vulnerability. The goal is to use design, plant choice and maintenance to develop a landscape that offers the best fire protection while enhancing the property. The idea is to create defensible space and surround the house with materials that are less likely to burn.

Although mulch helps retain soil moisture, when dry, it can become flammable.

Defensible Space

The home and the area up to five feet from the furthest attached exterior point of the home should be free of all combustible materials. Science indicates that this zone is the most vulnerable to embers and is the most important zone to take immediate action on.

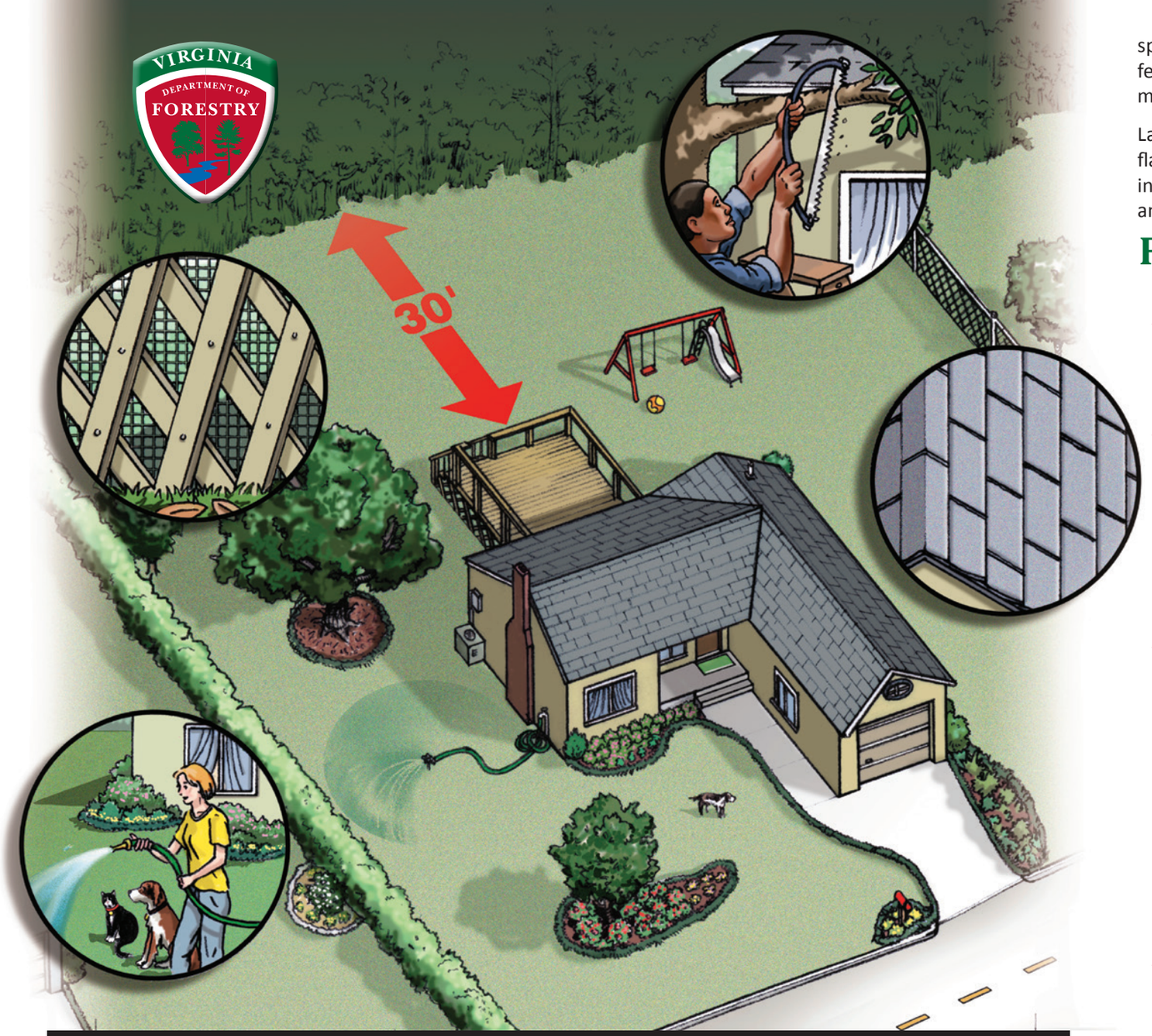
Maintain at least 30 feet of space surrounding your home that is lean, clean and green.

Lean – Keep trees and shrubs well manicured and pruned. Prune shrubs and tree branches to a height of at least 6 to 10 feet from the ground, keep free of dead wood, and prune away from the roof and 15 feet of a chimney.

Clean – Remove all dead plant material from around your home, including leaves, dry vegetation and stacked firewood. Remove more flammable plants, such as ornamental junipers, hollies, red cedar and young pine that contain resins, oils and waxes. Deciduous trees and shrubs (drop their leaves every fall) burn with less intensity than evergreens and are a better choice to plant closer to your house.

Green – Plant fire-resistant vegetation that is healthy and green throughout the year. Use less-flammable plants: azalea, viburnum, crepe myrtle, spirea, hydrangea, annual and perennial flowers, ferns, dogwood, redbud, red maple and oak. Mow, maintain and water your lawn regularly.

Landscaping beyond 30 feet should remove enough flammable vegetation to slow a fire down, reduce its intensity, and move the fire out of the tree crowns and onto the ground.



For additional information about Firewise:

Virginia Department of Forestry
Firewise Program – firewisevirginia.org
Agency Web Site – dof.virginia.gov
Ready Set Go - wildlandfirersg.org

Fire-Adapted Communities
fireadapted.org
National Firewise Organization
firewise.org

Fire-Resistant Roof and Exterior Construction

- ✓ Firewise construction materials include Class-A asphalt shingles, metal, tile and concrete products. Additionally, the inclusion of a fire-resistant sub-roof adds protection.
- ✓ Wall materials that resist heat and flames include brick, cement, plaster, stucco and concrete masonry. Tempered and double-pane glass windows can make a home more resistant to wildfire heat and flames. Although some vinyl will not burn, vinyl soffits and plastic skylights can melt, allowing embers into the attic space.
- ✓ Wire mesh no larger than ⅛ inch can be used to prevent sparks from entering your home through vents, and prevent combustible materials and debris from accumulating beneath decks or elevated porches.

Simply making sure that your gutters, eaves and roof are clear of debris will reduce your fire threat.

Fire-Resistant Attachments

- ✓ Attachments include any structure, such as decks, porches or fences, connected to your home. These structures can act as fuses or fuel bridges. If an attachment to a home is not fire-resistant, then the home as a whole is not firewise.
- ✓ If you wish to attach an all-wood fence to your home, use masonry or metal as a protective barrier between the fence and house.