

# My Personal Wildland Fire ACTION GUIDE



☐ Ready



☐ Set



☐ Go!



# Ready, Set, Go!



## Saving Lives and Property through Advance Planning and Action

This publication was prepared by the Payson Fire Department, the Pine-Strawberry Fire Department and the International Association of Fire Chiefs' RSG! Program.

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**T**he wildland fire season is becoming a year-round reality in the United States. This strains firefighting resources and emphasizes the need for residents to be proactive and prepared for the threat of wildland fire.

Wildland fire is, and always has been, a natural occurrence. Mountains, canyons, grasslands, and forests burn periodically as part of a healthy ecosystem. Wildland fires are fueled by an abundance of dry vegetation, driven by increasing seasonal temperatures and fanned by hot dry desert winds. As is well known in Northern Gila County, wildland fires are also increasingly dangerous and deadly.

Here in Rim Country, there is a long history of wildland fires, with several threatening the communities of Payson, Pine and Strawberry. Tragically, firefighters have lost their lives during several of these fires. The June 1990 Dude Fire burned 28,000 acres and six firefighters were killed in a burn over. Since then, the 2004 Willow Fire, the 2009 Point Fire, the 2017 Highline Fire and most recently the 2020 Bush and Polles Fires have all threatened this area. Unfortunately, a firefighter on the Polles fire made the ultimate sacrifice while protecting the community.

Every year along the Mogollon Rim, wildland fire threatens homes in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) – an area or zone where human development meets or mixes with natural vegetation. Studies show as many as 80 percent of homes lost to wildland fires could have been saved if their owners had followed simple risk-reduction practices. In addition, wildland fire related deaths can occur because people wait too long to leave their homes.

Proactive mitigation around your property and safe and early evacuation can help protect you, your household and your property. In this Action Guide, we provide tips and tools you need to prepare your home, your property and your household for a wildland fire threat; to have situational awareness when a fire starts; and to act early as directed by local officials.

Remember, all efforts to improve defensible space on your property can decrease property damage and help firefighters with suppression efforts. Taking advance personal action can result in improved safety for all involved.

The Ready, Set, Go (RSG)! Program works in collaboration with existing, local wildland fire public education efforts and amplifies the common goal for wildland fire preparedness.

The tips on the following pages are designed to help guide action and create a safer environment for you, your household, and first responders.

**It is not a question of if, but when, the next major wildland fire will occur here along the rim.** Use this Action Guide to help you become wildland fire ready!

Visit us at [wildlandfireRSG.org](https://wildlandfireRSG.org) to learn more about becoming prepared.

*Ready* begins with property owners taking action.

Defensible space around property created with different types of rock mulch.



Defensible space works with well maintained fire-resistant vegetation.



Ember damage, but structure saved.



## Defensible Space and Fire Resistant Landscaping Can Protect Your Home

If you live next to a dense vegetation area, the WUI, you should provide defensible space to better protect your home and create a safer area for firefighters to operate if they have the capacity to defend your home. Creating a buffer zone by removing weeds, dried grass, brush, and other vegetation helps keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risk of ignition from flying embers.

### Consider This

Unmanaged and overgrown vegetation between and around homes increases the risk of wildland fire spreading throughout the community and endangering lives and property. Pre-fire planning through mitigation and vegetation management allows firefighters the ability to fight wildland fires more safely. The work you complete today may save your home and protect a firefighter tomorrow.

### Ember Zone

An ember is a small, glowing fragment from a wildland fire that is carried by the wind. Embers are light enough to travel long distances and are the primary reason homes ignite, often times significant distances from the actual flame front of a wildland fire. Embers travel inside your home through vents, windows, and other openings.

## Homes on the Wildland Boundary Are at Risk, Too

If your home is within one mile of a natural area, it may be considered part of an ember zone. Keep in mind, embers can destroy homes or neighborhoods far from the actual front of the fire. You and your home must be prepared well before a fire occurs. Use the following pages to help ready yourself and your home well before a fire occurs.

### Red Flag Warning

A Red Flag Warning is issued by the National Weather Service when low humidity, warm temperatures, dry fuels and strong winds could combine to produce extreme fire behavior. Fires occurring during a Red Flag day can be very dangerous as wildland fires can spread rapidly. You should always follow the instructions provided by your local emergency response organizations and be prepared to take immediate action.

# Ready Create Defensible Space

**D**efensible space is the area around your home in which vegetation, debris, and other combustible fuels have been removed to slow the spread of fire to and from the home.

It can better protect the home from igniting due to direct flame contact and radiant heat. Defensible space is essential to help protect a structure and create a safer area for firefighters during a wildland fire.

You can create defensible space by removing weeds, brush and firewood and by spacing out vegetation around your property.

Although this might seem like a daunting task, we recommend starting in Zone 1 and working your way out. Follow the considerations below for each zone and your property can become safer with each step.



## PROPERTY ACCESS

- ☐ Address numbers must be visible to responding emergency service personnel from the roadway.
- ☐ Roadways more than 150 feet long must have fuels mitigation maintained to a minimum of 10 feet clearance on each side of the roadway.
- ☐ Overhanging obstructions must be cleared to 13'6" above the roadway.

### ZONE 1 (IMMEDIATE)

0-5 feet around your home or to property line

- ☐ Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
- ☐ Repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- ☐ Install 1/8 inch metal mesh screening on vents to keep embers out.
- ☐ Ensure an approved chimney cap is installed to reduce embers.
- ☐ Trim branches at least 10 feet away from roofs and chimneys.
- ☐ Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors. Stack firewood outside the immediate zone.
- ☐ Remove anything flammable stored underneath decks or porches.
- ☐ Use non-wood, low-growing herbaceous vegetation. Succulents, or other fire-resistant plants, are recommended choices.

### ZONE 2 (INTERMEDIATE)

5-30 feet around your home or to property line

- ☐ Clear vegetation 10 feet from stationary propane tanks.
- ☐ Keep native grasses mowed to a height of four inches or less and remove leaf and needle debris from the yard.
- ☐ Remove ladder fuels (vegetation under trees). Prune trees up to six feet from the ground. For trees shorter than 18 feet tall, trim above the ground to one third of the overall tree height.
- ☐ Space trees to have approximately 10 feet between crowns or approximately 40 trees per 1/2 acre.
- ☐ Trees and shrubs in this zone should be limited to clusters, breaking up the continuity of the vegetation across the landscape.
- ☐ Move trailers, recreational vehicles, storage sheds and other combustible structures out of this zone and into Zone 3. If unable to move, create defensible space around them as if they were a part of your home.

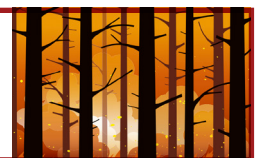
### ZONE 3 (EXTENDED)

30-200 feet around your home or to property line

- ☐ Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.
- ☐ Keep native grasses mowed to a height of four inches or less.
- ☐ Remove dead plant and tree material.
- ☐ Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.
- ☐ Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.
- ☐ Trees 30 to 100 feet from the home should have separation between the canopy tops.

## Remember the Ember Zone

Embers are burning pieces of airborne material that can be carried more than a mile by the wind. Research points to embers and small flames as the main way homes ignite in wildland fires.



# Ready Make Your Home Fire Resistant - Harden Your Home

Construction materials and the quality of the defensible space surrounding the structure are what increases the chance of survival in a wildland fire. Embers from a wildland fire will find the weak spot in your home's fire protection scheme and can easily lodge in small, overlooked, or seemingly inconsequential areas. Below are some home hardening measures you can take to safeguard your home.



## Balconies and Decks

**Construct your balconies or decks with noncombustible materials, and do not store combustible items underneath them. If there is a fire threat, bring any furniture into your home.** Embers can collect in or on combustible surfaces, or beneath decks and balconies, igniting the material and giving a path for the fire to enter your home. Remove pine needles, leaves, grass, or any other flammable materials from underneath your deck.



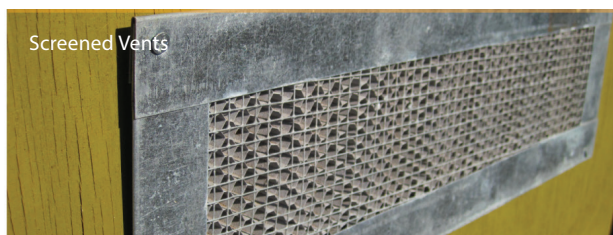
## Roofs

Roofs are vulnerable to embers that become lodged and can start a fire, especially anywhere on the roof with litter buildup. Roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles, and rain gutters are all points of entry. **Block off all open spaces, and regularly inspect these areas. Remove any combustible material.**



## Eaves

Embers can gather under open eaves and ignite combustible material. **Enclose your eaves with non-combustible or ignition resistant material to prevent ember intrusion, and regularly clear away debris that collects here.**



## Vents

Embers can enter the attic or other concealed spaces and ignite combustible materials through open and unscreened vents. Vents in eaves, gables and cornices are particularly vulnerable if not properly screened with wire mesh. **Use corrosion resistant metal mesh to screen all vents, and check them regularly to remove any debris that collects in front of the screen.**



## Walls and Fencing

Combustible siding or fencing provide surfaces and crevices for embers to nestle and ignite. **Ensure wooden fences do not connect directly to the house. Create a break in the fence by using a gate or non-combustible substitute to connect to the house. Build or remodel with noncombustible or ignition-resistant materials wherever possible, regularly clear away debris from any crevices, and perform annual upkeep.**



## Windows and Doors

Embers can enter gaps in doors, including garage doors. **Install weather proofing around your garage door, and if your garage is attached to your home, make sure the interior door is solid and on self-closing hinges.**

Plants or combustible storage near windows can be ignited from embers and generate heat that can break windows and/or melt combustible frames. **Wherever possible, use dual-paned windows with tempered glass, as they are less likely to shatter from radiant heat.**

# Tour A Wildland Fire Prepared Home in the Mogollon Rim Country



Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your house. Ensure gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment. Utilize driveways, walkways, paths, patios and decks to break up fuels around your home. Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road - reflective numbering is recommended.

Use heavy timber or non-flammable construction material for decks. Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire resistant materials to prevent embers from blowing underneath. Never store combustible materials under your deck. Keep your deck clear of combustible items such as baskets, dried flower arrangements and other debris.

Install weather stripping around and under the vehicle access door to prevent embers from entering the garage. Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between the living areas and garage. Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, and bucket or hoe available in case of emergency. Keep a ladder readily accessible. Store combustible and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.

Screen or cover rain gutters with a flat, non-combustible guard or screen to prevent accumulation of plant debris. The screen should follow the slope of the roof and fit onto or inside the gutter. Remove debris from gutters at least twice a year.



Ensure all vegetation within 100 feet around your home is frequently cleared of dead vegetation, dried leaves, pine needles and ground debris. Prune lower branches of tall trees 8-10 feet from the ground. Keep shrubs a minimum of 10 feet away from the lower edge of tree branches and remove all vegetation growing underneath tree limbs. Keep trees far away from power lines.

Property owners with more than 100 feet of land and/or with a home ignition zone that overlaps into adjacent property should consider taking action within up to 200 additional feet. Work collaboratively with neighbors to reduce shared risk.

Keep wood piles, propane tanks and combustible materials away from your home and other structures such as detached garages, barns and sheds.

Remember the importance of routine maintenance. Creating defensible space is not something you do just once, it is continual.



Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from wind-blown embers. Use Class A fire-rated roof covering such as composition shingles, metal or tile when roofing or re-roofing. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent ember intrusion. Frequently clear pine needles, leaves and other debris from your roof and gutters. Prune tree branches within 10 feet of your roof. Box-in eaves with a non-combustible or ignition resistant material.

Vents on homes are vulnerable to flying embers. All vent openings should be covered with 1/8 inch or smaller metal mesh. Attic vents in eaves or cornices should be baffled or otherwise protected to prevent ember intrusion.

Use non-combustible fencing within 5 feet of your home. Keep the base of the fence area clear of the debris. Keep multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and other structures on your property.

Cover your chimney and stovepipe with a non-flammable screen with mesh no greater than 1/2 inch to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire. Be sure to install a chimney cap. Make sure to trim away any tree branches within 10 feet of your chimney.

# Create Your Own Action Guide

Your Wildland Fire Action Guide must be prepared with all members of your household well in advance of a wildland fire. Use these checklists to help you get Ready and Set with situational awareness in the threat of wildland fire.

## Ready Get Ready

- ☐ Sign up for Everbridge! This is the emergency notification system for the Rim Country area. The app is available through your phone's app store or [readygila.com/everbridge](https://readygila.com/everbridge).
- ☐ Create defensible space.
- ☐ Create a Household Action Plan that includes evacuation meeting locations and communication plans - rehearse it regularly. Include the evacuation of all pets and large animals, which may include horses and livestock, in your plan.
  - ☐ Designate an emergency meeting location outside the evacuation area.
  - ☐ Plan and practice several different evacuation routes.
- ☐ Have fire extinguishers on hand and teach your household how to use them.
- ☐ Ensure that everyone in your household knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are located and how to use them.
- ☐ Assemble a Go Kit as recommended by the American Red Cross. Keep an extra kit in your vehicle.
  - ☐ Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers in your Go Kit.
  - ☐ Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire and weather emergency announcements.
- ☐ Assemble a Go Kit for your pet(s) including food, water, medications, and vaccination records.
- ☐ Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members.
- ☐ Please contact Gila County for large animal evacuations: [www.gilacountyaz.gov](https://www.gilacountyaz.gov) or (928) 402 8888.

### EMERGENCY SUPPLIES LIST FOR GO KIT

The American Red Cross recommends every household have an emergency supply kit assembled long before a wildland fire or other emergency occurs. Use the checklist below to help assemble yours. For more information on emergency supplies visit [redcross.org/get-help](https://redcross.org/get-help).

- ☐ Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day) and non-perishable food for household members (3 day supply).
- ☐ First aid kit and sanitation supplies, including toilet paper and baby wipes.
- ☐ Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.
- ☐ An extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash, or traveler's checks.
- ☐ Extra eyeglasses, contact lenses, prescriptions, and medications.
- ☐ Important household member documents and contact numbers, including insurance documents.
- ☐ Map marked with evacuation routes. It is important to have a printed map in case your phone dies. It may also be easier to see the printed map than a phone screen under smokey conditions.
- ☐ Easily carried valuables and irreplaceable items.
- ☐ Personal electronic devices and chargers.
- ☐ Keep a pair of old shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.

## Set Prepare and Be Aware

- ☐ Monitor fire weather conditions and fire status. Check your local fire department or emergency management websites and social media accounts for wildland fire information. Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates, including Red Flag Warnings in your area.
- ☐ Alert household and neighbors.
- ☐ Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e., clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- ☐ Ensure that you have your Go Kit on hand that includes all necessary items, such as a battery powered radio, spare batteries, emergency contact numbers, and drinking water.
- ☐ Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water, and ensure your household members and pets are accounted for and ready to leave.

### INSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- ☐ Close all windows and doors.
- ☐ Remove all shades and curtains from windows and ensure all blinds remain open, unless you have metal blinds. Close all metal blinds.
- ☐ Move furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- ☐ Turn off pilot lights and air conditioning units.
- ☐ Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.

### OUTSIDE CHECKLIST, IF TIME ALLOWS

- ☐ Make sure combustible items are a safe distance away from the exterior of the house (e.g., patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc.). If you have time, place these items inside

your garage or home where they will not become a hazard.

- ☐ Turn off propane tanks and other gas at the meter.
- ☐ Don't leave sprinklers on or water running. They can affect critical water pressure.
- ☐ Leave exterior lights on.
- ☐ Back your car into the driveway to facilitate a quick departure. Shut doors and roll up windows.
- ☐ Have a ladder ready to cover attic vents and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals. Do so in a safe manner, and only if time permits.
- ☐ Patrol your property and extinguish small fires, if you can do so safely, until you leave.

### IF YOU ARE TRAPPED: SURVIVAL TIPS

- ☐ If you have become trapped and cannot evacuate, call 9-1-1 immediately.
- ☐ Stay in your home, sheltering away from walls, until the fire passes or emergency personnel tell you differently. Follow their instructions and commands.
- ☐ Look for spot fires and extinguish if found inside house.
- ☐ Wear long sleeves, long pants and a bandana made of natural fibers, such as cotton.
- ☐ Stay hydrated.
- ☐ Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside, be prepared).
- ☐ Fill sinks and tubs for an emergency water supply.
- ☐ Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.
- ☐ After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks or embers if you are able to safely do so. Check the attic as well.

## Go! Act Early

Leaving early gives you and your household members the best chance of surviving a wildland fire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job in a safer environment. Be sure to follow the direction of your local authorities.

### WHEN TO LEAVE

Do not wait to be advised to leave if there is a possible threat to your home or evacuation route. Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke, or road congestion. If you are advised to leave by local authorities, do not hesitate!

### WHERE TO GO

Go to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)



### HOW TO GET THERE

Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles. Choose the safest route away from the fire.

### WHAT TO TAKE

Take your Go Kit containing your household members' and pet's necessary items.

### REMEMBER THE 8 P'S!

- ☐ People & Pets
- ☐ Pictures & Photo Albums
- ☐ PC's
- ☐ Papers (important)
- ☐ Prescriptions & Medications  
(don't forget your pet's!)
- ☐ Plastics (credit cards)
- ☐ Personal Devices  
(phones and chargers)
- ☐ Passports & IDs

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# My Personal Wildland Fire ACTION PLAN

Write up your Wildland Fire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your household can see it. Rehearse it with your household.

During high-fire-danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry, and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildland fire.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Out-of-Area Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## EVACUATION ROUTES

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

## WHERE TO GO

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## LOCATION OF GO KIT(S)

\_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contact your local fire department for more tips on preparing before a wildland fire.



# My Personal Wildland Fire ACTION PLAN

## Residential Safety Checklist

Tips to Improve Household and Property Survival During a Wildland Fire

### Ready

#### Get Ready

- ☒ Dispose of or relocate combustible material from around your home.
- ☒ Trim trees and bushes allowing ample space between your home and landscape vegetation.
- ☒ Arrange your Go Kit with prescription medication, emergency supplies, important documents and other essential items.
- ☒ Sign up for Everbridge! This is the emergency notification system for the Rim Country area. The app is available through your phone's app store or [readygila.com/everbridge](https://readygila.com/everbridge).

### Set

#### Prepare and Be Aware

- ☒ Make sure you have your Go Kit on hand in an accessible place.
- ☒ Alert household and neighbors of your action plan. Ensure your household members and pets are accounted for and ready to leave.
- ☒ Monitor local fire weather conditions and listen to emergency notification systems.

### Go!

#### Act Early

- ☒ Get your Go Kit and leave well before the threat approaches following a planned, accessible route.
- ☒ Stay aware of the situation and follow your plan.
- ☒ Cooperate with local authorities during evacuation and re-entry processes.



FEMA

[wildlandfireRSG.org](https://wildlandfireRSG.org)

