



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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N.C. Forest Service reminding property owners to take action at home, be prepared for wildfire

RALEIGH – Now is the time for North Carolinians to act on wildfire mitigation practices and Firewise principles. By taking appropriate action, residents can help protect their homes and communities from wildfires by creating a defensible space while reducing risk.

“Even though we’re still a few weeks from the official start of spring wildfire season, now is the time for homeowners to be thinking about simple steps they can take to reduce risk in the home ignition zone by creating a defensible space,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “Wildfires that occur in the wildland urban interface can be extremely dangerous and destructive to lives and property.”

The wildland urban interface (WUI) -- the area where structures and other human development blend with undeveloped wildland, forest or vegetation -- is a notable threat for increased wildfire impacts due to rapid population growth and people moving into formerly rural areas, resulting in an increase in WUI acreage.

This trend is significant due to the nearly 13 million North Carolina acres classified as WUI, which leads the nation in this amount of area. Additionally, more than half of North Carolina’s citizens live in WUI areas. The dangers of the WUI mean that homeowners must take the initiative in working to protect their property and neighborhoods before a wildfire occurs.

For those living in the WUI, especially those in Western North Carolina experiencing excessive fuel loading from Hurricane Helene storm debris, here are some easy steps to protect your home from wildfires:

- Clear off pine needles, dead leaves and anything else that can burn from your rooflines, gutters, decks, porches, patios and along fence lines. Falling and windblown embers will have nothing to burn.
- Trim back any shrubs or tree branches that come closer than 5 feet to your house along with any overhanging branches.

- Walk around your house and remove anything within 30 feet that could burn such as woodpiles, spare lumber, vehicles, boats and anything else that can act as a large source of fuel.
- Instead of landscaping with flammable mulches, consider using crushed stone or gravel.
- Rake out any landscaping mulch to at least 5 feet away. Embers that land in mulch that touches your house, deck or fence is an easy fire hazard.
- Store away furniture cushions, rattan mats, potted plants and other decorations from doors, decks, porches and patios. These items catch embers and help ignite your home if you leave them outside.
- Assess your house to see what openings you can screen or temporarily seal. Windblown embers can get into homes easily through vents and other openings, burning the home from the inside out.
- Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways/paths, patios and decks.

For more information and tips to help create a defensible space around your home and protect your property from wildfire, visit www.resistwildfirenc.org. To learn more about fire safety and preventing wildfires and loss of property, visit www.ncforestservice.gov.



The N.C. Forest Service is a division of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
Steve Troxler, Commissioner

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