

Ready, Set, Go!

Wildland Fire Preparedness for Farmers & Ranchers



It is not a question of if, but **when** the next major wildland fire will occur. As wildland fires continue to intensify, it is important to remember the specific considerations facing farmers and ranchers. Wildland fire is becoming a year-round reality. Many of the areas at greatest risk could be your ranch or farm property.

Agricultural properties that border non-urban areas often have unique challenges, making them more difficult to protect from a wildland fire.

This Ready, Set, Go! Program Farmers & Ranchers brochure is designed to help you better understand wildland fire mitigation efforts to best protect your household, livestock, and livelihood.

Defensible Space:

Increases your safety and reduces risk of fire damage to your property

Defensible 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. The areas where human development meet or mix with natural vegetation is called the wildland-urban interface (WUI). Creating defensible space in these areas can reduce the risk of fire damage to structures and allow space for firefighting operations.

Homeowners should consider landscaping plans that include non-combustible materials or fire-resistant plants and conduct regular maintenance to create and maintain defensible space around their home and outbuildings. Special consideration should be given to wind-driven embers which can travel up to a mile or more ahead of the flame front. Consider areas where embers can land by looking over your home and outbuildings for cracks, openings, vents, and other areas where an ember could enter the space.

Farm and ranch properties may require very large areas of defensible space due to the surrounding vegetation and topography that may be part of your property. Agricultural assets such as feed, packing boxes, mulch, and fuel supplies are particularly susceptible to flames and wind-driven embers. Livestock and equipment are also at risk. As a result, you must carefully assess your property, paying particular attention to the frequency of wildland fire and the risks around the property to determine how much defensible space is needed and what must be done during a wildland fire event. Coordinate with your local fire department for a risk assessment review of your property.

Unmanaged vegetation between and around homes, farms, or livestock structures increases the risk of wildland fire spreading. Pre-fire planning, fuel management and sufficient fuel breaks allow firefighters the space they need to fight wildland fires.



Contact your local fire department today!

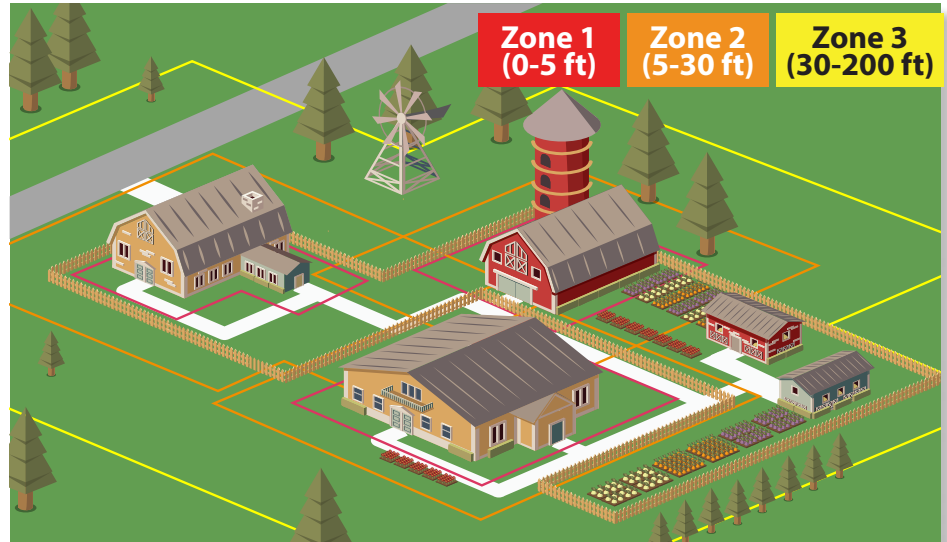


Learn how you can make a difference and protect yourself and community!
Visit wildlandfireRSG.org to learn more about simple actions you can take to prepare!

Ready, Set, Go!

Defensible space can be created by removing vegetation that is next to or near property at risk. In addition, the impact on assets can be reduced by using mitigated fuel breaks, strategic grazing and landscaping plans with non-combustible materials and fire-resistant plants.

Special attention should be given to wind-driven embers that are carried ahead of the fire front. These embers have the potential to be carried both short (100-200 ft) and long distances (1 mile or more) depending on current weather conditions. Embers that land in orchards, on roofs, and in feed or fuel storage facilities can start destructive fires.



Take action! Create your personal defensible space with the help of the RSG! Program National Action Guide. Contact your local fire department or visit wildlandfireRSG.org.

Orchards and Groves

Fruit trees are susceptible to damage from wildland fires in two ways: radiant heat from the adjacent fire can scorch orchards or fires can completely burn the trees. A wildland fire driven by wind can rapidly overcome an orchard, destroying both fruit and trees in the process.

Activating irrigation systems can be extremely effective in preventing a fire from spreading into a grove. For best results, the systems should be activated well ahead of the arrival of the fire to ensure leaf litter is thoroughly soaked. High winds may cause power companies to shut off power in certain areas, so it is critical to soak the leaf litter while there is still power to the pumps. Consider alternative methods of irrigation if electricity is not an option.

The best method to prevent an advancing wildland fire from reaching an orchard or grove is to create mitigated areas around the orchard by removing undesired trees and brush from the areas you want to protect. This allows firefighters to use fire suppression tactics to keep the fire from reaching the property.

To prepare orchards and groves, farmers and ranchers should:

- ☐ Remove leaf litter around tree trunks in areas you are trying to protect.
- ☐ Create defensible spaces around crops and outbuildings.
- ☐ Open the gates you can, remove locks and be prepared to have maps available for firefighters.
- ☐ Apply irrigation water for as long as possible.



Woodpiles around orchards serve as a landing zone for wind-driven embers and can worsen the fire.

Livestock and Rangeland Operations

It is often impossible for many ranchers to evacuate their livestock due to the number of animals they have on their property. As a result, ranchers should consider establishing relatively safe havens for their animals through rotational grazing. Intensive-managed grazing near ranch houses, barns or equipment areas can provide defensible space for those assets and create an area where livestock can be better protected from the main body of the fire.

If time allows and you are able to, evacuate as many livestock as possible. Do not turn livestock loose. Work with local first responders to determine how to best manage your remaining livestock if unable to evacuate them all.

Row Crops

Damage from wildland fire is typically minor in row crops. But, because many row crop farms are in close proximity to natural vegetation, farm workers, outbuildings and equipment could be in danger. Farmers should take defensible space precautions around the farm house and other structures throughout the property.

To prepare for a wildland fire, farmers and ranchers should:

- ☐ Know fire history and typical fire behavior of the area.
- ☐ Create a livestock relocation/evacuation plan.
- ☐ Create defensible space around all structures.
- ☐ Clear vegetation around fuel tanks and equipment.
- ☐ Create an evacuation plan for all workers.
- ☐ Open the gates you can, remove locks and be prepared to have maps available for firefighters.
- ☐ Clearly mark roads, water tanks, ponds, and other water supplies available for firefighting efforts. Include maps with latitude/longitude information if available.
- ☐ Provide a copy of your planning information to your local fire department.

Wildland fire can threaten your property. By creating defensible space, you can reduce your chances of damage.

To prepare for a wildland fire, livestock operators should:

- ☐ Ensure proper registration and branding of livestock.
- ☐ Move livestock to previously grazed areas to help protect them against an advancing wildland fire by acting as a mitigated area.
- ☐ Open and unlock gates so livestock can be moved as necessary.
- ☐ Establish and maintain firebreaks around pastures.
- ☐ Evacuate as many animals as possible, as time allows.
- ☐ Close all doors, windows, large openings in barns and other structures.
- ☐ Shut off propane tanks.

To prepare row crops, farmers and ranchers should:

- ☐ Store farm supplies in areas that will not be exposed to embers or flame fronts.
- ☐ Create a safe zone clear of vegetation for equipment and crops.
- ☐ Properly mark all storage areas used for chemicals.
- ☐ Identify all water sources that may be helpful towards firefighting efforts; pumps, wells, ponds, stock tanks, etc.



My Personal Wildland Fire ACTION PLAN

Ready Before a fire occurs

Prepare yourself and your household

- ☐ Create a Wildland Fire Action Plan, visit wildlandfireRSG.org.
- ☐ Know multiple evacuation routes.
- ☐ Keep emergency supply kits on property and in personal vehicles.

Prepare your property

- ☐ Ensure your address is clearly marked and visible from the street.
- ☐ Establish and maintain mitigated firebreaks around your pastures and structures.
- ☐ Assess your property for ignition sources.
- ☐ Create defensible space around all structures.
- ☐ Clearly mark water tanks, ponds, and other water supplies available for firefighting use.
- ☐ Reinforce bridges to ensure that fire engines or other fire suppression equipment are supported. Post bridge load limits and bridge heights.

Prepare your livestock

- ☐ Create a livestock relocation/evacuation plan.
- ☐ Ensure proper registration and branding of livestock.
- ☐ Establish a contingency plan for feeding livestock if grazing land is destroyed.

Set As the fire approaches

- ☐ Monitor local radio or television stations for weather updates.
- ☐ Load vehicles with emergency supplies and valuables.
- ☐ Alert your household and workers of any changes in the situation.
- ☐ Turn on irrigation.
- ☐ Open gates to give access to firefighters.
- ☐ Relocate livestock.
- ☐ Close all doors and windows and turn on all lights in homes, barns, and other structures.
- ☐ Shut off propane tanks.
- ☐ Ensure all water source connections and locations are identified and operational.
- ☐ Move heavy equipment into non vegetated areas such as crop fields or mowed pastures.

Go! Act early

- ☐ Leave early enough to avoid being caught in the fire.
- ☐ Do not go back to open gates or evacuate animals.

Remember: During a wildland fire, responding resources may not be from the immediate area or have local knowledge. Clearly marked addresses, water supplies, and bridge load limits save valuable time.

If you are trapped or unable to evacuate:

- ☐ Call 9-1-1 immediately.
- ☐ Wear long sleeves and pants made of natural fibers, such as cotton. Boots, gloves, hats, goggles, and bandanas are also helpful against smoke and embers.
- ☐ Stay hydrated.
- ☐ Patrol your property for fires, if it is safe to do so.
- ☐ Take refuge inside a structure, away from outside walls.
- ☐ Place wet towels under doors to keep smoke and embers out.

Remember: The best thing you can do is evacuate early and let firefighters do their jobs. If you choose to stay, understand that severe fire behavior could prevent firefighters from rescuing you or other members of your household.

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