

Wildfire Prevention Tips (con't)

You Are at Medium Risk if You See...

- Thick, continuous grasses, weeds, or shrubs.
- Continuous thin layer of pine needles and scattered pine trees.
- Scattered palmettos or shrubs up to 3 feet tall separated by patches of grass or sand.
- A clear view into or across the undeveloped area.

You Live in a High Risk, Fire-Prone Area if You See...

- A thick bed of pine needles and lots of pine trees.
- Continuous palmettos, shrubs, or sawgrass more than 3 feet tall.
- Vines and small-to-medium trees or palms beneath taller pine trees.
- Impenetrable shrubs or young pines.
- No clear view into the undeveloped area because of dense growth

Reducing Wildfire Risk

One of the best ways to minimize the effects of wildfire on undeveloped land is to reduce the density of the plants. This can be achieved in several ways, but the strategy that mimics nature and protects the health of the ecosystem is prescribed burning. Consider encouraging the use of prescribed fire on undeveloped land near your home. In the meantime, you can do a variety of other things near your home to increase your protection from wildfire. Just as coastal residents prepare for hurricane season, you should prepare for wildfire seasons

Wildfire Protection for Homes in Medium-Risk and High-Risk Areas

- Make it easy for fire trucks to get to your house.
- Clearly label your street name and house number with metal signs and posts.
- Make sure the driveway has a 16-foot clearance of vegetation, and create a 30-foot-wide space around your home for fire trucks to maneuver

Inside Your Defensible Space

- Trim lower branches up to 10 feet on tall trees, remove vines from trees, and keep shrubbery away from pine trees so that a fire on the ground cannot climb up these fuel ladders to the treetops.

- Landscape your defensible space to make it difficult for fire to spread to your house. Use shrub islands or patches of perennials rather than continuous beds of plantings. Thin trees so branches do not touch each other.
- Keep combustible items like wood piles, compost piles, gas grills, gas cans, and propane tanks at least 30 feet away from your house. Clear away dead vegetation, pine needles, and branches.
- Use mowed grass, gravel walkways, and mulched plantings near your home. Although mulch helps retain soil moisture, it must be kept moist or it can become a fuel source. Do not use thick combustible mulch beside your home's foundation.
- Keep large, leafy, hardwood trees in your yard, particularly on the east and west sides of your house. Their shade is important to cool your house, and the flat leaves trap moisture on the ground. Large pine trees also provide good shade. Trim lower branches and rake up pine needles.
- Remove flammable plants like saw palmetto, wax myrtle, yaupon holly, red cedar, and gallberry within 30 feet of your home. These shrubs are appropriate farther from your home and in natural areas managed with prescribed fire. They contain resins, oils, and waxes that burn readily. Many other plants are not as flammable, such as dogwood, viburnum, redbud, sycamore, magnolia, beautyberry, oaks, red maple, wild azalea, and sweetgum.

Beyond Your Defensible Space

Reduce dense vegetation. Prescribed fire is best for the ecosystem, but mowing or other methods of eliminating fuels will help protect your home. Call the Division of Forestry (DOF) or Cooperative Extension office for a list of qualified burners and fuel reduction contractors in your area.

For more information, see Florida Division of Forestry website at <http://www.fl-dof.com/> or University of Florida's Forest Management division at <http://www.sfrc.ufl.edu/Extension/fireinfo.htm>

In 1998, during a 44-day period,
500,000 acres burned in Florida.
149,000 of those were in
Volusia County alone.

UTILITIES COMMISSION

City of New Smyrna Beach



Water Conservation and Wild Fire Prevention in New Smyrna Beach



photo courtesy of Daytona Beach News-Journal

Utilities Commission

200 Canal Street

New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168

386-427-1361

New Smyrna Beach Fire Department

386-424-2162

Emergencies: 911

We are dry, very dry.

Your flowers and grass know it. The birds know it. There is no need to tell Mother Nature - we are dry, very dry. The average amount of rainfall from Florida reporting stations was 0.54 inches in March -- the driest March on record and 3.13 inches below the average for that month. Between the end of February and throughout March, we went for five weeks without any rain. April did not give us much rain either.

The nation's weather experts blame a La Nina shift in rainfall patterns -- a cooler Pacific Ocean that means less rain for Southern states and more for the nation's northern regions.

Many residents remember 8 years ago when similarly dry conditions meant unprecedented, and seemingly unstoppable, wildfires in Volusia and Flagler Counties. And after recent years' hurricanes, there is plenty of kindling on the ground that could provide just the right fuel for a wildfire to get out of control in New Smyrna Beach.

There are several important and simple ways you can help. Most fires are caused by carelessness. People who throw lit cigarettes on the ground and out of moving car windows are putting all of us at risk. Do not carelessly toss out lit cigarettes. Use an ash tray or douse them with water. Another careless act happens when people burn trash. One ember caught by the wind can cause enormous damage. There is a burn ban in effect in Volusia County now. Be smart about disposing of your trash.

With the lack of rainfall, it is very important everyone takes steps to help. Be sure to conserve potable water and prepare your home and property so wildfire threats are reduced.



photo courtesy of Daytona Beach News-Journal

What can I do to help?

Water Conservation

We all need water to survive. It is arguably our most valuable natural resource. So when we don't get enough rain, it is important to conserve the potable water we do have. This means water from any source - whether from the Floridan aquifer or backyard wells. When the dry conditions persist, we see as much as a 30 percent spike in water consumption by Utilities Commission customers. This can be directly attributed to people watering their lawns more often. Unfortunately, very little of this water goes back into the aquifer but instead becomes freshwater run-off in our streams and rivers.



Simple steps can be taken to keep your grass and yard healthy during dry periods and reduce your need to water.

- To keep your grass from being scorched, don't mow it first thing in the morning. Wait until late afternoon.
- When you mow, set the blades higher and don't cut the grass as low as you otherwise might.
- For most Florida soils, applying no more than three-quarters of an inch of water per application is enough to replenish the grass. Saturate the root zone, then let soil dry to encourage healthy, deep root growth. Over-watering promotes weed growth, disease and fungus.
- Develop landscaping that is not reliant on water. St. Johns River Water Management District has some suggestions on its website (www.sjrwmd.org).
- Check the settings on your irrigation timers. Water only two days per week, first thing in the morning.
- Minimizing irrigation is the goal. If you have reuse service, you should manage irrigation with that resource, too. But you are helping to reduce river outfall disposal by using it. There are no restrictions for reuse like with potable water.

Wildfire Prevention

Tips from the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Fire is a powerful part of Florida's landscape. It can maintain healthy natural ecosystems, but can also turn a home to ashes. Florida's frequent lightning strikes and human carelessness guarantee that wildfire will continue to be a factor in rural and suburban areas. With the steady rise of new homes in undeveloped areas, some homeowners may wonder if they are in danger of wildfire. Find out if you are at risk, and follow these guidelines to reduce the threat of wildfire.

Determine Your Risk

Two factors contribute to wildfire risk:

- the land use in your area, and
- the kind of vegetation around your home.

Surrounding Land Use

If you live in a subdivision surrounded by homes and lawns, or in an urban area, it is unlikely that a wildfire would reach your house. Like the majority of Floridians, you are at low risk of wildfire and the rest of this brochure does not apply to the safety of your home.

If you have undeveloped or wooded land near your home, however, you could be at some risk in the event of a wildfire.

Vegetation

Walk around outside your home and look carefully at the nearby land. The type, size, and density of the plants determine wildfire risk. Some places may have characteristics of more than one category. Use the following criteria to assess your risk.

You Are at Low Risk if You See...

- Bare ground, improved pasture, or widely spaced grassy clumps or plants.
- Moist forest, mostly leafy trees, or mostly large trees.
- Few plants growing low to the ground.
- Oak leaves or other broad leaves on the ground