



# TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

## *Fire Information:* Wildland Urban Interface

Historically, Texas wildfires threaten tracts of land, destroying trees and wildlife habitat, and affecting water quality. In the past, lives and personal property were seldom victim to the unpredictability of wildfires. That has changed.

In recent years, a significant number of homes and other structures have been destroyed by wildfire statewide. The difference may be the increasing number of homes springing up in what used to be rural land.

The Wildland Urban Interface occurs where urban structures – mainly residences – are built close to flammable fuels found naturally in wooded areas. This creates two major concerns: the careless actions by some homeowners can increase the risk of wildfires; and wildfires pose a greater threat to lives, homes and businesses. The first priority of firefighters is protecting people’s lives. Protecting property and resources is secondary.

### **Defensible Space:**

The most effective action to reduce flammable materials around the home is “Firewise landscaping”. This is a process whereby the homeowner modifies the flammable fuels around the home to make it less vulnerable to wildland fires. This is done through a process of utilizing fire-resistant plants in the landscape design; proper pruning of trees; and the removal of dead plant material within 30 feet of the home, including firewood. “Firewise landscaping” can not only offer protection to the home by removing fuel, but also provides “defensible space” for firefighters to defend the home in the event suppression becomes necessary.

### **Access:**

Make sure firefighters can find your property by marking your entrance clearly, according to the 911 addressing system.

Construct drives at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet. Provide a turnaround large enough for heavy trucks.

### **Firewise Community USA:**

This program is specially adapted for small communities, developments, and residential associations in fire-prone areas. The process starts when the community contacts <http://www.firewise.org/usa> . A WUI specialist will conduct a community assessment. A local “Firewise Board” consisting of homeowners and local fire professionals is formed to prepare goals and local solutions to mitigate the community’s fire risk. Once these projects have been implemented, the community can then apply for recognition as a “Firewise Community USA”.