

A few precautions could protect your property from wildfires

With wildfires continuing to burn throughout the state of Texas, Wimberley residents are being urged to take precautions to reduce the risk of damage from wildfires.

Homeowners can better protect themselves by reducing the available fuel for wildfires - brush, grass and trees that generally burn in a wildfire - through appropriate landscaping and creation of a defensible space around their homes.

Mayor Bob Flocke encouraged residents to walk around their homes, looking for any path that fire could follow. That includes any vegetation or flammable materials that lead directly to the house.

"Taking preventative action now can make the difference between your home surviving a wildfire or not," Flocke said. "Whether a home survives or not is dependent on the homeowner paying attention to those details in the landscape."

The following tips provided by Texas Forest Service can help homeowners better prepare for wildfire:

- Clear dead wood and dense, flammable vegetation that is 30 feet or closer to your home.
- Remove leaves and pine needles from gutters, roofs and underneath decks.
- Trim all tree branches overhanging your house including a radius of at least 20-feet around your chimney and 14 feet of overhead, overhang clearance in your driveway.
- Stack your firewood at least 30 feet from your home.
- Create a barrier between your home and lawn by using river rock or some other nonflammable material. Keep the lawn trimmed to create a barrier to protect your home.
- Plan an escape route and discuss it with your family. Have practice drills and include your pets.
- Check your fire extinguishers. Make sure they're charged and easy to reach in an emergency. Tell all family members where they are and teach them how to use them.
- If a wildfire does threaten your home, place a water hose on a rack and attach it to an outside faucet.

With the current risk of wildfires in the area considered to be extreme, residents should monitor media reports and call 9-1-1 immediately to report fires or smoke in the area. Residents are also reminded that outdoor burning currently is prohibited in Wimberley and Hays County.

"It is important to be prepared, at all times, to evacuate your home in the event of a fast moving wildfire" said Flocke. "Leave when you are told to leave." If wide scale evacuations are ordered, emergency shelters will be set up at local schools and community centers located out of harm's way.

Residents will typically be notified of the need to evacuate by phone thru the reverse 9-1-1 system or in person by emergency personnel going door to door.

"I would encourage residents to also register their mobile phones with the Capital Area Council of Governments emergency notification system," said Mayor Flocke. "This is a free notification system where residents can receive calls on their home and mobile phones in the event of a significant local emergency."

To register on the CAPCOG system, log on to <http://wireless.capcog.org> or call [512-916-6035](tel:512-916-6035).

For additional information on wildfire prevention, log on to:

<http://txforestservice.tamu.edu/main/default.aspx>

In an attempt to further protect the community from the threat of wildfires, City officials will soon launch an effort to have Wimberley designated as a Firewise community. If you are interested in participating in the effort, please contact the City Administrator at [512.847.0025](tel:512.847.0025).