

The Battle Creek Fire burned 13,700 acres and 4 homes were completely destroyed. It took 1200 personnel to put the fire out in 6 life-threatening days. If more homes would have been prepared for wildfire, fire suppression crews could have spent less time defending homes and more time suppressing the actual fire.



Why Should You Be Worried About Wildfire?

- Fire is a natural part of our environment. Western South Dakota was burning long before European settlement. The Wildland Urban Interface, (WUI), is not a geographical place but a set of conditions that exist when natural fuels intermix with man made fuels, e.g. structures. There are 175 identified WUI areas in Pennington County.
- Many homes are built and maintained in this WUI area without regard to wildfire.
- With more people developing in the WUI, structures need to be maintained so they are more fire safe and are more defensible.

- Today's wildfires can burn intensely and be very difficult to control, as we witnessed with the Battle Creek Fire.
- Catastrophic wildfire events will contribute to the following:
 - Greater loss of life
 - Increased property losses
 - More damage to natural resources
 - More money spent on fire fighting.

How Fires Occur

- **FUEL**- is required for any fire to burn and includes anything that is combustible and available to burn, including-trees, shrubs, grass, homes, fences, sheds, and other vegetation and structures. Fine fuels, such as dead grass and pine needles, spread fire faster than coarse fuels, such as branches and larger timber litter.
 - **Surface fuels** – Any grass, shrubs, pine needles, dead branches and timber litter.
 - **Ladder fuels** – Tall brush, low branches and other fuels that can carry fire from a ground fire up into the canopy of the trees.
 - **Crown fuels** – Flammable tops of trees and tall shrubs. Once a wildfire becomes a crown fire, it can spread rapidly and reach extreme intensities, and are harder to manage. The amount, size, moisture content, arrangement of fuels, and other characteristics influence ease of ignition, rate of spread, length of flames produced, fire intensity and other fire behavior.

- **WEATHER**- Dry, hot and windy weather increases the likelihood of a major wildfire. These conditions make ignition easier, allow fuels to burn more rapidly and increase fire intensity. A burning ember, from a wildfire, can travel more than one mile in windy conditions.
- **TOPOGRAPHY**- Greatly influences fire behavior. Steep slopes and narrow canyons can create a "chimney" effect and may increase fire intensity.
- **THE HOME IGNITION ZONE**- The condition of the 100-200 feet that makes up the survivable space around structures has a large impact of the probability of a structure igniting. The use of Firewise building materials and fire resistive landscaping practices greatly increases a structures chance of survival.



Lean, Green and Clean

Lean: Prune your shrubs and cut back tree branches, especially within 15 feet of your chimney. You also want to cut back limbs that stretch over part or all of your roof.

Green: Plant fire-resistive vegetation that is healthy and green for most of the year. Then make sure you keep it adequately watered. (We can give you a complete list of fire-safe plants.)

Clean: Remove all dead plant material, including dead limbs, sticks, twigs, leaves, dry grass, and even stacked firewood from your 30 foot defensible space. Remember, if you do not have any fuel right around your home, a wildfire cannot spread from the woods to your home.



Strategies To Reduce Wildfire Threat

- 1. Defensible Space:** 100-200 feet around the structure. Remove dead vegetation and beds of pine needles. Provide separation for shrubs and trees to break the fuel continuity, and also plant fire-resistant vegetation such as Lily, Iris, Fern, Oak and Aspen trees. You should also maintain an irrigated yard.
- 2. Roof:** Fire-resistant. You may also install noncombustible gutters.
- 3. Walls:** Fire resistant.
- 4. Chimney:** Spark arrestors.
- 5. Windows:** Tempered or multi-layered glass.
- 6. Elevated Wood Decks and Manufactured Homes:** 1/4 inch mesh and noncombustible skirting.
- 7. Inside the Home:** Smoke alarms and Fire Extinguishers.
- 8. Water Supply:** Within 1,000 feet of your home.

What Parts of the Home Ignite First?

- **Roofs** – flammable roof coverings, plant and tree debris, combustible gutters and downspouts.
- **Eaves / Soffits** – burning embers enter the attic through open soffits
- **Windows** – transmit heat and break under heat stress.
- **Other flammable objects exposed to heat source** – wooden decks, fences, combustible wall cladding.

PENNINGTON COUNTY Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Being Better Prepared To Live With Fire



www.firewise.org

Contact Info:
Pennington County
Fire Administrator
315 Saint Joe #B-28
Rapid City, SD 57701
605-394-5367

denny.gorton@co.pennington.sd.us