Public Service Bulletin

Fire Prevention for Rural and Remote Residents

What you can do to protect yourself, your family and your community

Myth #1: Fire Protection response time is just a matter of distance from the fire hall

Reality: Fire Department travel time is just one part of the equation. Other factors include:

- Detection – how long has the fire burned before someone notices? Many fires are first noticed by passersby, when the fire is already far advanced. Reliable alarm systems can drastically reduce this time.
- Alerting – the time between detection and someone placing the call to 911. Many factors can cause a delay at this stage, including – surprisingly – lack of awareness of how to call for help.
- Information provided to 911 – Accurate description of the incident, the exact location and good driving directions will help emergency responders arrive as quickly as possible and bring the most suitable equipment. Confusing or vague information will cause a delayed response.

Myth #2: If I live in a remote location, there is no point in calling for help

Reality: Increased distance certainly does delay emergency response. However, no matter where you live there is a lot you can do to increase the chance of the fire department having something to save when it arrives:

- Building maintenance: When heating and electrical systems and appliances are in good condition, fires are less likely to start. When stored combustible materials are kept to a minimum, fires have less to burn and spread more slowly. When alarms are in working order, fires are detected soon after they start
- Habits: Simple measures such as keeping interior doors closed can substantially reduce the spread of smoke in the event of the fire. Not only does this often reduce the amount of damage to the building and its contents, this greatly increases your chance of survival. Keeping windows shut when no one is home also helps slow the spread of a fire. There are many other fire safety tips available from the National Fire Protection Association
- Exterior maintenance: Keeping gutters and decks free of leaves and debris, trimming back vegetation around the house, and thinning stands of trees nearby are simple measures that reduce the risk from wildfires. Keeping the yard and driveway uncluttered makes it easier for emergency crews to enter the yard and begin work. The

FireSmart program provides in-depth instructions on making your yard fire-resistant and accessible.

- Quick suppression of small fires: *Never enter a burning building or expose yourself to smoke.* However, simple measures such as portable extinguishers, water hoses and rooftop sprinklers can keep fires that are just beginning from getting out of control.
- Building or renovating? There is a *lot* you can do to increase fire resistance. Talk to your licenced building official!

Myth #3: If I live in the country, I'm on my own when it comes to fire protection

Reality: Your community can do a lot to enhance fire protection for all of its residents. Some examples include:

- Good road signs and coordinated property address signs make it easier for all emergency responders (police, ambulance, fire) to find their way to your home without delay
- Good road maintenance, including the driveway into your property, is vital.
- The FireSmart program, if implemented and maintained community-wide, can greatly reduce the risk from wildfire for everyone.
- Reliable water sources can be developed at remote locations to give firefighters what they need most: water in sufficient quantity to control the fire.
- Community-minded businesses make it possible for employees to be volunteer firefighters
- Building Code compliance ensures that new buildings are constructed to current standards, which are designed to minimize the risk of fire and maximize occupant safety
- Fire Code inspections and fire safety education help property owners learn how to minimize risk

For more information please contact your local fire department

Courtesy of Meadow Lake Fire & Rescue
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