

Firewise Glossary

Arson Fire	A wildfire willfully ignited by anyone to burn, or spread to, vegetation or property without consent of the owner or his/her agent.
Attack a Fire	Limit the spread of fire by any appropriate means.
Brush	A collective term that refers to stands of vegetation dominated by shrubby, woody plants, or low-growing trees, usually of a type undesirable for livestock or timber management.
Brush fire	A fire burning in vegetation that is predominantly shrubs, brush, and scrub growth.
Burning ban	A declared ban on open air burning within a specified area, usually due to sustained high fire danger.
Burning conditions	The state of the combined factors of the environment that affect fire behavior in a specified fuel type.
Canopy	The stratum containing the crowns of the tallest vegetation present (living or dead), usually above 20 feet.
Class A Foam	Foam intended for use on Class A or woody fuels; made from hydrocarbon-based surfactant, therefore lacking the strong filming properties of Class B foam, but possessing excellent wetting properties.
Closure	Legal restriction, but not necessarily elimination, of specified activities such as smoking, camping or entry that might cause fires in a given area.
Combustible	Any material that, in the form in which it is used and under the conditions anticipated, will ignite and burn.
Condition of Vegetation	Stage of growth or degree of flammability of vegetation that forms part of a fuel complex.
Conflagration	A raging, destructive fire. Often used to describe a fire burning under extreme fire weather. The term is also used when a wildland fire burns into a wildland/urban interface, destroying many structures.
Control a fire	To complete control line around a fire, any spot fire therefrom, and any interior island to be saved.
Crown fire	A fire that advances from top to top of trees or shrubs more or less independent of a surface fire.
Debris burning fire	In fire suppression, a fire spreading from any fire originally ignited to clear land or burn rubbish, garbage, crop stubble, or meadows (excluding incendiary fires).
Defensible space	An area, typically a width of 30 feet or more, between an improved property and a potential wildfire where the combustibles have been removed or modified.

Dry Hydrant	An arrangement of pipe permanently connected to a water source other than a piped, pressurized water supply system that provides a ready means of water supply for firefighting purposes and that utilizes the suction capability of fire department pumpers.
Duff	The layer of decomposing organic materials lying below the litter layer of freshly fallen twigs, needles and leaves and immediately above the mineral soil.
Escape Route	Route away from dangerous areas on a fire; should be preplanned.
Evacuation	The temporary movement of people and their possessions from locations threatened by wildfire.
Exposure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Property that may be endangered by a fire burning in another structure or by a wildfire. (2) Direction in which a slope faces, usually with respect to cardinal directions. (3) The general surroundings of a site with special reference to its openness to winds.
Extreme fire behavior	A level of fire behavior characteristics that ordinarily precludes methods of direct control. One or more of the following is usually involved: high rates of speed, prolific crowning and/or spotting, presence of fire whirls, a strong convection column. Predictability is difficult because such fires often exercise some degree of influence on their environments and behave erratically, sometimes dangerously.
Fine Fuels	Fast-drying dead fuels, generally characterized by a comparatively high surface area-to-volume ratio, which are less than 1/4-inch in diameter. These fuels (grass, leaves, needles, etc.) ignite readily and are consumed rapidly by fire when dry.
Fire behavior	The manner in which a fire reacts to the influences of fuel, weather, and topography.
Fire danger index	A relative number indicating the severity of wildland fire danger as determined from burning conditions and other variable factors of fire danger.
Fire department	Any regularly organized fire department, fire protection district or fire company regularly charged with the responsibility of providing fire protection to the jurisdiction.
Fire front	That part of a fire within which continuous flaming combustion is taking place. Unless otherwise specified it is assumed to be the leading edge of the fire perimeter.
Fire hazard	A fuel complex, defined by volume, type condition, arrangement, and location, that determines the degree of ease of ignition and of resistance to control.
Fire hydrant	A valved connection on a piped water supply system having one or more outlets that is used to supply hose and fire department pumpers with water.
Fire prevention	Activities, including education, engineering, enforcement and administration, that are directed at reducing the number of wildfires, the costs of suppression, and fire-caused damage to resources and property.
Fire proofing	Removing or treating fuel with fire retardant to reduce the danger of fires igniting or spreading (e.g., fire-proofing roadsides, campsites, structural timber). Protection is relative, not absolute.

Fire protection	The actions taken to limit the adverse environmental, social, political and economical effects of fire.
Fire regime	Periodicity and pattern of naturally-occurring fires in a particular area or vegetative type, described in terms of frequency, biological severity, and area extent. For example, frequent, low-intensity surface fires with one to 25-year return intervals occur in the southern pine forests of the Southeastern United States, the sawgrass everglades of Florida, the mixed conifer forests of the western Sierras of California, and so forth.
Fire resistant roofing	The classification of roofing assemblies A, B or C as defined in the Uniform Building Code (UPC) Standard 32.7.
Fire resistant tree	A species with compact, resin-free, thick corky bark and less flammable foliage that has a relatively lower probability of being killed or scarred by a fire than a fire sensitive tree.
Fire retardant	Any substance except plain water that by chemical or physical action reduces flammability of fuels or slows their rate of combustion.
Fire season	(1) Period(s) of the year during which wildland fires are likely to occur, spread, and affect resources values sufficient to warrant organized fire management activities. (2) A legally enacted time during which burning activities are regulated by State or local authority.
Fire storm	Violent convection caused by a large continuous area of intense fire. Often characterized by destructively violent surface indrafts, near and beyond the perimeter, and sometimes by tornado-like whirls.
Fire suppressant	Any agent used to extinguish the flaming and glowing phases of combustion by direct application to the burning fuel.
Fire triangle	Instructional aid in which the sides of a triangle are used to represent the three factors (oxygen, heat, fuel) necessary for combustion and flame production; removal of any of the three factors causes flame production to cease.
Fire weather	Weather conditions which influence fire starts, fire behavior or fire suppression.
Fire whirl	Spinning vortex column of ascending hot air and gases rising from a fire and carrying aloft smoke, debris, and flame. Fire whirls range in size from less than one foot to over 500 feet in diameter. Large fire whirls have the intensity of a small tornado.
Firebrand	Any source of heat, natural or human made, capable of igniting wildland fuels. Flaming or glowing fuel particles that can be carried naturally by wind, convection currents, or by gravity into unburned fuels. Examples include leaves, pine cones, glowing charcoal, and sparks.
Firebreak	A natural or constructed barrier used to stop or check fires that may occur, or to provide a control line from which to work.
Firefighter	A person who is trained and proficient in the components of structural or wildland fire.
Fire-resistive rating	The time that the material or construction will withstand fire exposure as determined by a fire test made in conformity with the standard methods of fire tests of building, construction and materials.

Firewise construction	The use of materials and systems in the design and construction of a building or structure to safeguard against the spread of fire within a building or structure and the spread of fire to or from buildings or structures to the wildland/urban interface area.
Firewise landscaping	Vegetative management that removes flammable fuels from around a structure to reduce exposure to radiant heat. The flammable fuels may be replaced with green lawn, gardens, certain individually spaced green, ornamental shrubs, individually spaced and pruned trees, decorative stone or other non-flammable or flame-resistant materials.
Flame	A mass of gas undergoing rapid combustion, generally accompanied by evolution of sensible heat and incandescence.
Flammability	The relative ease with which fuels ignite and burn regardless of the quantity of the fuels.
Foam	The aerated solution created by forcing air into, or entraining air in water containing a foam concentrate by means of suitably designed equipment or by cascading it through the air at a high velocity. Foam reduces combustion by cooling, moistening and excluding oxygen.
Fuel condition	Relative flammability of fuel as determined by fuel type and environmental conditions.
Fuel loading	The volume of fuel in a given area generally expressed in tons per acre.
Fuel modification	Any manipulation or removal of fuels to reduce the likelihood of ignition or the resistance to fire control.
Fuels	All combustible material within the wildland/urban interface or intermix, including vegetation and structures.
Fuelbreak	An area, strategically located for fighting anticipated fires, where the native vegetation has been permanently modified or replaced so that fires burning into it can be more easily controlled. Fuel breaks divide fire-prone areas into smaller areas for easier fire control and to provide access for firefighting.
Greenbelt	A fuel break designated for use other than fire protection.
Ground fuels	All combustible materials such as grass, duff, loose surface litter, tree or shrub roots, rotting wood, leaves, peat or sawdust that typically support combustion.
Hazard	The degree of flammability of the fuels once a fire starts. This includes the fuel (type, arrangement, volume and condition), topography and weather.
Hazardous areas	Those wildland areas where the combination of vegetation, topography, weather, and the threat of fire to life and property create difficult and dangerous problems.
Hazard reduction	Any treatment of living and dead fuels that reduces the threat of ignition and spread of fire.
Human-caused fire	Any fire caused directly or indirectly by person(s).
Human-caused risk	The probability of a fire ignition as a result of human activities.

Hydrant	A discharge pipe with three valve and fittings at which water can be drawn from a water main or other source for the purpose of fighting fires.
Ignition probability	Chance that a firebrand will cause an ignition when it lands on receptive fuels.
Ignition time	Time between application of an ignition source and self-sustained combustion of a fuel.
Initial attack	The actions taken by the first resources to arrive at a wildfire to protect lives and property, and prevent further extension of the fire.
I-Zone	The line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.
Ladder fuels	Fuels that provide vertical continuity allowing fire to carry from surface fuels into the crowns of trees or shrubs with relative ease.
Mitigation	Action that moderates the severity of a fire hazard or risk.
National Fire Danger Rating System	A uniform fire danger rating system that focuses on the environmental factors that control the moisture content of fuels.
Natural barrier	Any area where lack of flammable material obstructs the spread of wildfires.
Noncombustible	A material that, in the form in which it is used and under the conditions anticipated, will not aid combustion or add appreciable heat to an ambient fire.
Open burning	Uncontrolled burning of wastes in the open or in an open dump.
Overstory	That portion of the trees in a forest which forms the upper or uppermost layer.
Peak fire season	That period of the fire season during which fires are expected to ignite most readily, to burn with greater than average intensity, and to create damages at an unacceptable level.
Preparedness	(1) Condition or degree of being ready to cope with a potential fire situation. (2) Mental readiness to recognize changes in fire danger and act promptly when action is appropriate.
Prescribed burning	Controlled application of fire to wildland fuels in either their natural or modified state, under specified environmental conditions, which allows the fire to be confined to a predetermined area, and to produce the fire behavior and fire characteristics required to attain planned fire treatment and resource management objectives.
Prescribed fire	A fire burning within prescription. This fire may result from either planned or unplanned ignitions.
Property protection	To protect structures from damage by fire, whether the fire is inside the structure, or is threatening the structure from an exterior source. The municipal firefighter is trained and equipped for this mission and not usually trained and equipped to suppress wildland fires. Wildland fire protection agencies are not normally trained nor charged with the responsibility to provide structural fire protection but will act within their training and capabilities to safety prevent a wildland fire from igniting structures.

Protection area	That area for which a particular fire protection organization has the primary responsibility for attacking an uncontrolled fire and for directing the suppression action. Such responsibility may develop through law, contract, or personal interest of the fire protection agent. Several agencies or entities may have some basic responsibilities without being known as the fire organization having direct protection responsibility.
Response	Movement of an individual firefighting resource from its assigned standby location to another location or to an incident in reaction to dispatch orders or to a reported alarm.
Retardant	A substance or chemical agent which reduces the flammability of combustibles.
Risk	The chance of a fire starting from any cause.
Rural fire district (RFD)	An organization established to provide fire protection to a designated geographic area outside of areas under municipal fire protection. Usually has some taxing authority and officials may be appointed or elected.
Rural fire protection	Fire protection and firefighting problems that are outside of areas under municipal fire prevention and building regulations and that are usually remote from public water supplies.
Slope	The variation of terrain from the horizontal; the number of feet rise or fall per 100 feet measured horizontally, expressed as a percentage.
Smoke	(1) The visible products of combustion rising above a fire. (2) Term used when reporting a fire or probable fire in its initial stages.
Structure fire	Fire originating in and burning any part of all of any building, shelter, or other structure.
Structural fire protection	The protection of a structure from interior and exterior fire ignition sources. This fire protection service is normally provided by municipal fire departments, with trained and equipped personnel. After life safety, the agency's priority is to keep the fire from leaving the structure of origin and to protect the structure from an advancing wildland fire. (The equipment and training required to conduct structural fire protection is not normally provided to the wildland firefighter.) Various taxing authorities fund this service.
Suppression	The most aggressive fire protection strategy, it leads to the total extinguishment of a fire.
Surface fuel	Fuels lying on or near the surface of the ground, consisting of leaf and needle litter, dead branch material, downed logs, bark, tree cones, and low stature living plants.
Tree crown	The primary and secondary branches growing out from the main stem, together with twigs and foliage.
Uncontrolled fire	Any fire which threatens to destroy life, property, or natural resources, and (a) is not burning within the confines of firebreaks, or (b) is burning with such intensity that it could not be readily extinguished with ordinary, commonly available tools.
Understory	Low-growing vegetation (herbaceous, brush or reproduction) growing under a stand of trees. Also, that portion of trees in a forest stand below the overstory.
Urban interface	Any area where wildland fuels threaten to ignite combustible homes and structures.

Volunteer fire department (VFD)

A fire department of which some or all members are unpaid.

Volunteer firefighter

Legally enrolled firefighter under the fire department organization laws who devotes time and energy to community fire service without compensation other than Worker's Compensation or other similar death and injury benefits.

Water supply

A source of water for firefighting activities.

Wildfire

An unplanned and uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels, at times involving structures.

Wildfire Causes

The general causes of wildland fires are (1) natural (such as lightning), (2) accidental (debris burning, children with matches, and so forth), and (3) intentional (arson).

Wildland

An area in which development is essentially non-existent, except for roads, railroads, power lines, and similar transportation facilities. Structures, if any, are widely scattered.

Wildland fire

Any fire occurring on the wildlands, regardless of ignition source, damages or benefits.

Wildland fire protection

The protection of natural resources and watersheds from damage by wildland fires. State and Federal forestry or land management agencies normally provide wildland fire protection with trained and equipped personnel. (The equipment and training required to conduct wildland fire protection is not normally provided to the structural fire protection firefighter.) Various taxing authorities and fees fund this service.

Wildland/Urban Interface

Any area where wildland fuels threaten to ignite combustible homes and structures.

References:

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