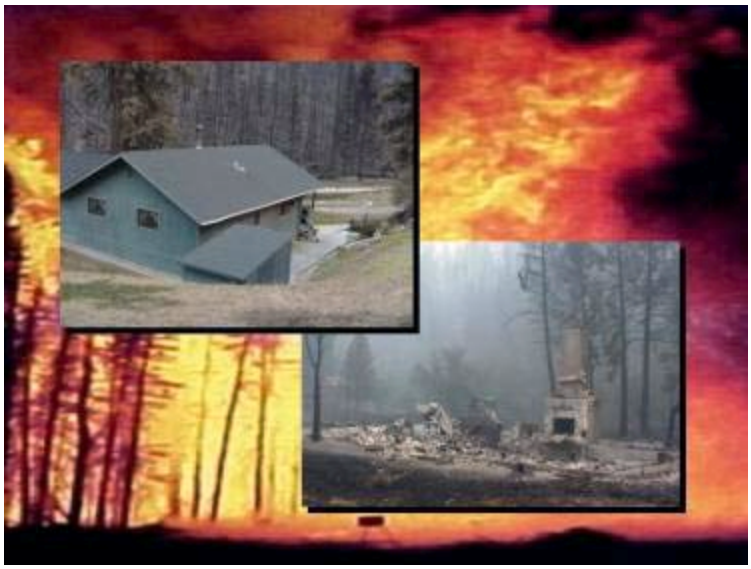
National Fire Plan

Preventing Home Ignition During Wildland

Urban Fires



Scientists at the Fire Science Laboratory's Fire Behavior Unit in Missoula, Mont., are working on ways to prevent homes and other structures close to wildlands from igniting and burning up during a wildland fire.

Researchers believe the key to a building surviving a wildland fire is to prevent it from igniting at all. They have found that during a severe fire, the home's characteristics (design, adjacent vegetation, and other factors) plus a cleared area 100-200 feet around the home determine its ignition potential. Fire behavior scientists call these factors the home ignition zone.

Their research is timely because of the increase in the number of people who live near forested wildlands. As people move to land in and adjacent to forests, they create what the fire behavior group calls the wildland-urban interface.

A primary goal for the fire behavior group is to teach homeowners what they must know to keep themselves and their homes safe. When homeowners assume responsibility for reducing their home's ignitability, the wildland-urban interface becomes not a threat, but a fire-wise zone.

As part of its educational goals, the unit has created Protecting Your Home From Wildfire, a video for homeowners that is distributed nationally. Among their current work is a course on how homes catch fire. They are also compiling resource materials to use with home ignition courses and guidelines for choosing ignition-resistant exterior building materials.

The Wildland Fire Risk to Flammable Structures incorporates a map and data to identify the current degree of wildland-urban fire exposure in the U.S. This product is available at www.firelab.org.

For additional information on the National Fire Plan, visit www.fireplan.gov