

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Warning: Hot Coffee!

Hot Topic: Fire Control in the Wildland-Urban Interface

Learning objective: The student shall be able to list at least five items that can reduce fire risk in the wildland-urban interface.

With more than 200 wildland fires currently burning in 10 Western States, the annual late summer fire season is a good reminder of the importance of planning and protection in the wildland-urban interface, even in those areas not traditionally considered fire-prone.

Here are a few requirements from the model codes:

- The code official may determine when areas subject to wildland fires become hazardous, and may close off all public entry.
- Smoking, open fires, barbecues, torches, tar pots, lanterns, road flares, model rocketry, tracer bullets, explosives and blasting agents, fireworks, and smoldering materials used in beekeeping may be prohibited in the hazardous area.
- Chimneys installed on any outdoor fireplace, barbecue, incinerator, or heating equipment located within 10 feet (3.05 meters) of hazardous vegetation should be equipped with an approved spark arrester.
- Brush and other vegetation should be cleared away from electrical transmission and distribution lines. The minimum clearance distances between the power lines and vegetation is dependent upon the line voltage in the transmission network.
- Areas within 10 feet (3.05 m) on each side of highways and private streets should be cleared of combustible vegetation.
- Motorcycles, motor scooters, and other motor vehicles should not be used in hazardous fire areas unless they are operated on already established public or private roads.
- A defensible space of at least 30 feet (9.14 meters) should be provided between buildings and any combustible vegetation. This space will reduce the likelihood of fire spread, and will provide firefighters an accessible place to work.



For additional information, refer to NFPA 1, *Uniform Fire Code*[™], Chapter 17, or the *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code*[™].