



## **ECOBROKER International** **Green Topic Pages**

### **Fire Safety - Choices That Fight Fire Devastation**

#### ***Snapshot & Benefits:***

Fire threatens homes from two different directions inside and outside. Statistics for 2000 show that 368,000 accidental home fires occurred, resulting in 3,420 deaths, 16,975 injuries and \$5.5 billion in direct property damage. By comparison, in 2002, a total of 88,458 wildfires consumed 6,937,584 acres and 2,381 structures. Consequently, homeowners should take action to protect their home from fire both inside and out.

When the inside of your home burns, its really not important whether a chimney fire, a candle or electrical problem started the house blazing. The important thing is that the fire is recognized immediately so that people and pets get to safety and the fire department has the opportunity to salvage the property.

Hard-wiring and interconnecting smoke detectors delivers a solid response to the possibility of fire. Interconnecting smoke detectors produces a simultaneous response to the presence of smoke. When one detector is activated, all detectors sound. This network of fire protection alerts the whole building. However, be warned that fire can damage the wiring of the home. This compromises the integrity of any hard-wired smoke detector unless it also uses a battery back-up. The battery back-up will take over ensuring a continuous response in case of fire.

#### ***Estimated Cost Savings:***

While costs can range from less than \$500 to a few thousand dollars for the electrical enhancements that create a smoke detection network, these expenses can often be reduced by combining the work with a remodeling project or other electrical improvements.

From the outside, drought and wildfire set the stage for homeowner anxiety. However, taking action now reduces future worries. In a process known as creating defensible space, a homeowner can diminish the wildfire threat. Essentially, three techniques guide homeowners through the process of creating defensible space removal, reduction and replacement.

#### ***Getting It Done:***

Start with the removal of entire plants. Dead trees and flammable shrubs as well as trees touching your home, within 15 feet of a chimney or encroaching on power lines pose the greatest risk. Once these hazards are removed, begin reduction the removal of plant parts. For example, remove the low and dead branches 8 15 ft up the trees and mow dried grass. Finally, replace some of the more flammable vegetation (shrubs or trees) with other plants or landscaping materials that are less likely to burn.

Steepness of slope is directly related to the amount of defensible space needed. There are a variety of resources providing guidance with calculating the appropriate amount of space recommended. Or you may contact someone who specializes in fire mitigation and/or tree trimming services. There are even experts in fire-safe landscaping and design, also known as firescaping.

A homeowner can tackle many of the tasks related to the creation of defensible space to help control costs. And there are always things that can be done to improve fire safety with little or no cost like identifying escape routes, designating a meeting place, testing your smoke detectors and practicing fire drills.

#### ***More Information On This Topic:***

Firewise: <http://www.firewise.org>

Fire Safe Council: <http://www.firesafecouncil.org>

National Interagency Fire Center: <http://www.nifc.gov>

National Fire Protection Association: <http://www.nfpa.org>

USFS Rocky Mountain Region: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/fire/rmacc.html>

Bureau of Land Management: <http://www.blm.gov>