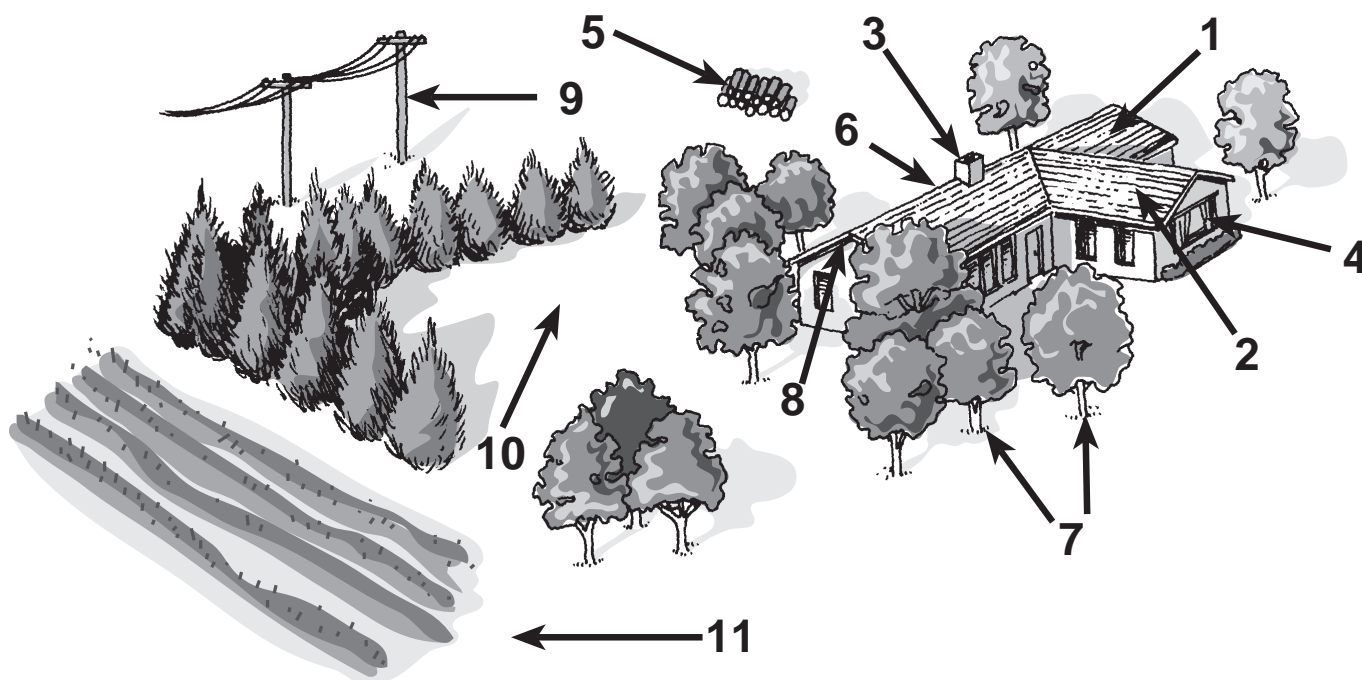




# Protecting Your Property from Wildfire

Wildfires are a fact of life on the prairie. Fire itself is not bad. It served as a natural control agent to promote grasses and restrict brush and trees from becoming dominant before European settlement. Used as a management tool, fire promotes grass in pastures and removes stubble from crop fields. Wildfire, however, is unwanted fire that is detrimental. During 1991 through 1995, wildfires in Kansas burned an average of 138,288 acres and caused an estimated \$2.9 million damage to property annually. These losses could have been reduced and in most cases prevented. Properly preparing your property for a wildfire will reduce your risk and increase the possibility of controlling a wildfire quickly.



Drawing adapted from *Energy Efficient Landscaping*, C627, by Gustaaf A. van der Hoeven

1. Use a fire-resistant (Class A or B) roof covering in new construction, reducing the chances of a burning ember starting your roof on fire. Replace wood shingles with fire resistant shingles.
2. Remove leaves and debris from roof and gutters regularly to decrease the chances of a burning ember starting your roof on fire.
3. Install spark arrestors on chimneys to prevent sparks and burning embers from escaping from your chimney.
4. Windows should be double-paned or use tempered glass and have fire-resistant drapes to reduce the amount of radiated heat entering your home. The reduced amount of heat transferred decreases the possibility of items in the house igniting from the heat of a wildfire.

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5. Store firewood and lumber at least 30 feet from structures to decrease the fuel for a fire near your buildings.
  6. Remove combustible storage under decks, stairs, and eaves to reduce the fuel for a fire near your buildings.
  7. For trees within 30 feet of a structure, prune limbs up to 20 feet to remove fuels that could cause the fire to increase in intensity.
  8. Cover all exterior vents with a 1/2-inch or smaller wire mesh to prevent burning embers and sparks from entering your attic or crawl space.
  9. Remove or prune any tree limbs encroaching power lines. A better approach is to only plant trees that will not exceed 25 feet in height within 25 feet of power lines to lessen the chance of a tree causing a downed power line that can ignite fuels on the ground.
  10. Keep grasses cut low, green, and growing for at least 30 feet, up to 100 feet on slopes from your building site. Fire accelerates up slopes. Low grass height will decrease the fuel available and its potential to damage your property. Green, growing grass is harder for fire to burn. The fire must dry out the grass before it will burn, slowing to stopping a fire to a point it can be kept away from a property.
  11. Maintain firebreaks that are free of live or dead vegetation around the property and windbreaks. This will slow or stop a wildfire from crossing your property.
  12. Install and maintain a dependable water source for your local fire department to use while defending your property and your neighbors. Deep ponds and underground storage tanks with dry hydrants can provide the extra water needed.
  13. Check with your local fire department to get their prevention recommendations and local and state burning regulations.
  14. Know how to call your local fire department in an emergency and post the number near telephones.

### **Recommended Kansas State University Publications:**

- Prescribed Burning: Safety (L-565 Revised)
- Prescribed Burning: Planning and Conducting (L-664 Revised)
- Prescribed Burning: A Management Tool (L-815)
- Prescribed Burning: Equipment (L-876)

### **Other sources of information:**

- Your Local Fire Department
- Kansas State Fire Marshall

**Jon Skinner**  
District Forester  
Kansas Forest Service

**Kansas Forest Service, Manhattan, Kansas**

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