

Explanations for the Woodland Home Wildfire Risk Assessment Form

SCORING

Start with 100 points. Add up all the points for the questions that were answered “NO” and subtract that total amount from 100. This score gives an idea of a home’s potential fire risk rating. Other factors not listed may render a home more or less fire-safe. The Tennessee Division of Forestry can help you decide which steps to take to make your home safer.

THE HOUSE

Roofing Materials. There are three classifications for roofing materials: A, B, C with A being the most fire resistant. Examples of Class A materials include most asphalt shingles, slate, clay tiles, metal, or cement, and concrete products. A roof made up of non-treated wooden shingles is classified as “Non-rated” and should be considered unprotected. Count only Class A coverings as being fire-resistant.

Siding. Materials such as brick, stone, block, stucco and masonry are excellent materials. Though some materials will not burn, such as vinyl, they may melt when exposed to high temperatures providing the fire with a direct path inside the home. Wood siding is relatively fire resistant when it is not compromised by such things as flammable vegetation, woodpiles, stored building materials, etc. Count only the excellent materials in the first sentence as being fire resistant.

Slope. Percent slope is calculated by dividing the amount of elevation gain in a known horizontal distance and then multiplying that amount by 100. For example, if land goes up 15 feet in a 100 foot horizontal distance, then the slope is 15%.

Decks. Wooden decks on posts out over steep slopes are especially vulnerable to wildfire as it spreads upslope. Firewood and other flammables should not be stored under the deck. Preferably deck is finished with lattice or screening to keep debris from accumulating.

Chimney spark arrestor. Windblown embers can get down into a fireplace’s chimney flue and cause a fire. And, embers leaving the chimney can start wildfires. Chimneys should have a spark arrestor installed made from welded wire or woven wire mesh with openings less than one-quarter of an inch.

AROUND THE HOUSE

Plants. All plants burn when enough heat is put to them. However, due to varying moisture and oil content, plants vary greatly in their flammability. Examples of flammable plants include pines and other evergreen trees (cedars, junipers, holly, spruces, firs, hemlock, redwood, yew, etc.). Additional flammable plants include magnolias, cypress, paper mulberry, rhododendron, laurel (sometimes called ivy), azaleas, mahonia, Japanese privet, Japanese honeysuckle, yucca and dried grasses and weeds. Less flammable plants include hardwood trees, alder, chokeberry, hydrangea, crapemyrtle, sumac, etc.

Tree spacing and limbing. Tree spacing and tree limbing concerns have to do with the potential spread of fire. Wherever there is closely-spaced vegetation it is of concern. However, we are mostly concerned with the flammable kinds of plants mentioned above. For example, hardwood tree tops are not of much concern by themselves, but a dense stand of evergreen trees with tops close together is. Evergreen trees should be thinned so there is at least 20 feet between the tops. The need for limbing, too, is connected with being a flammable tree. Closely spaced flammable trees within 100-feet of the house should have all limbs lower than 15-feet above the ground removed.

ACCESS TO HOUSE

Road cul-de-sacs. Road cul-de-sacs are short dead-end roads in a community. They have a circular turnaround area at the end. This turn-a-round must be big enough for fire engines to turn around. This means that the turnaround area must be at least 100’ wide.

For more information on protecting your home, please visit the Firewise Program website at www.firewise.org.