



April 2026 Spotlight

The Most Important Zone: 0–5 Feet Around Your Home

The 0–5 foot area around your home is critical for wildfire protection. Firewise USA® research shows this is where most home ignitions occur, often from wind driven embers. In Montana, strong winds, low humidity, and fine fuels like dried grasses, pine needles, and leaf litter allow embers to travel far and collect against structures even when fires are miles away.

Fire wise guidance is straightforward: keep this Immediate Zone as close to noncombustible as possible.

Montana specific fire wise actions include:

- Regularly remove pine needles, dried grass, leaves, and other debris from around foundations, decks, porches, and entrances. Fine fuels ignite easily during wind driven fire events
- Replace wood based mulches with noncombustible materials such as gravel, crushed rock, or concrete pavers, which perform better in Montana's dry, windy conditions
- Store firewood, lumber, fencing materials, and fuel containers well away from structures, particularly during fire season
- Remove dead or drought stressed plants and keep grasses green, irrigated (if possible), and maintained below four inches in height
- Avoid placing shrubs, juniper, ornamental grasses, woody vegetation or any plants high in oil directly next to exterior walls, as these commonly burn intensely and can transmit heat to siding and windows. **Visit our Fire wise Garden at Montana City Fire Station #1*



Special consideration should be given to areas where embers frequently collect (think leaf and snow build up) during wildfires, including roof valleys, building corners, under decks, alongside attached fences, and near vents or crawl space openings. Because many Montana homes are exposed to frequent wind events and prolonged dry periods, keeping this zone clean, accessible, and free of combustibles is critical to reducing the likelihood of ember caused home ignition. Taking action in this first five feet, especially early in the spring before fuels fully cure, provides one of the greatest returns on investment for wildfire preparedness in Montana.

Greater Helena Gives: Greater Helena Gives kicks off this May and offers an opportunity to support the work of Tri-County FireSafe Working Group. Funding raised through this community giving event helps us expand wildfire education efforts and strengthens our grant development capacity, which allows us to bring more resources and mitigation projects to Broadwater, Jefferson, and Lewis & Clark Counties.

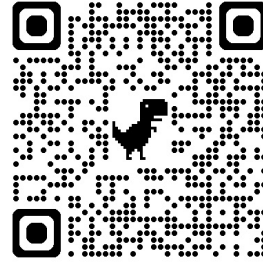
Please visit:
www.nfpa.org
www.tcfswg.org
For more details

Know Before You Burn: Spring Edition

Spring burning is one of the leading causes of early wildfires, warmer days and lingering snow can create a false sense of safety. Many spring fires start when dry grasses ignite even when conditions look “green.” Before you burn this Spring, check local burn restrictions and permit requirements for your county by visiting: <https://app.egovmt.com> Or use this QR-Code.

Things to Remember

- Watch the weather, wind is often the biggest danger
- Avoid burning during warm, dry, or gusty conditions
- Have water, tools, and adult supervision on site at all times
- Never leave a fire unattended



Alternatives to burning:

- Chipping or hauling debris
- Composting yard waste where appropriate
- Coordinating neighborhood cleanup days
- Mastication

Remember: Most wildfires are human caused and many of them start in spring. One unattended pile can put homes, firefighters, and neighbors at risk.

Helpful Checklist

Spring is the best time to prepare your home before grasses cure, winds pick up, and fire restrictions begin.

Here are some simple steps to reduce wildfire risk before fire season begins.

This April, focus on the basics:

Around the Home (0–5 feet) Lean Clean and Green

- Remove pine needles, leaves, and debris from roofs, gutters, decks, and porches
- Clear flammable materials away from siding and foundations
- Move firewood, lumber, and combustible storage at least 30 feet from structures

Home Exterior

- Inspect vents and screens; repair damaged or missing mesh
- Seal gaps where embers could enter (eaves, soffits, crawl spaces)
- Replace or repair loose or damaged siding, trim, or shingles

Yard & Landscaping

- Remove dead plants and leftover winter debris
- Prune shrubs and low tree branches near structures
- Mow grasses before they dry and become flashy fuels