April Wildfire Resiliency Tips

Spring has finally arrived in the North Country! However, before spring "green up" is also when the region is at the highest risk for wildfire. Now is the time to get outside, enjoy the fresh air, and help your property become more wildfire resilient. There are many projects you can do with little investment to lower your wildfire risks.

Be ready for emergency personnel if the need arises:
- Check and clear around address and street signs. Make sure the sign is perpendicular to the road and reflective on both sides.
- Make sure your driveway is cleared of overhanging trees and branches at a minimum of 14 feet wide and 14 feet high for easier access for emergency vehicles.

Make your home more wildfire resilient
- Screen areas below decks and porches with 1/8" wire mesh to help prevent material from accumulating underneath.
- Cover exterior attic and soffit vents with 1/8" metal wire mesh to help stop sparks from entering your home.
- Enclose eaves to help prevent embers/sparks from entering your home.
- Sweep pine needles and leaves from porches and rake from under decks, porches, play structures, etc.
- Clear any needles and leaves out of gutters and off of roofs.
- Inspect and replace shingles or roof tiles as needed. Cover ends of tiles and metal roofs with fire resistant stops to help prevent embers being sucked in during a wildfire.
- Make sure chimneys have spark arrestors.

Remove debris from around your home:
- Move woodpiles, construction materials, trash and other flammables at least 30 feet from your home or other buildings. This includes project wood under the porch and any stored propane or gas cans near the home.
- Rake and remove pine needles and leaves from 3 to 5 feet around your home and other buildings. Maintain the grass and weeds in the same perimeter.

Make your property more wildfire resilient:
- Remove lower limbs of trees up to 10 feet from forest floor that are within 30 feet of all structures to help keep future fires on the forest floor. Removing lower limbs will lower the risk of the "ladder" fuel from the forest floor to get up into the crown of the tree.
- Make sure trees are cut, brush is removed, and grass is trimmed around your propane tank. And remember, a full tank is a safer tank as we go into fire season.

- Dispose of branches, weeds, leaves, and pine needles at designated hazardous woody debris drop off sites. Check county websites for locations and operating hours.

May 1st is Community Wildfire Preparedness Day. Encourage your neighbors to:
- Create a family communication plan and have an evacuation route mapped out in the event of a wildfire.
- Locate two alternate routes out of your neighborhood and drive them with the family.
- Create or update an evacuation kit or go bag for each of your family members and pets (https://mwgjlaw.com/wildfires/grab-and-gochecklists).
- Encourage your neighbors to register online for their county emergency alert notification system. All information is confidential.
  Register for St. Louis County emergency notifications:
  https://member.everbridge.net/453003085616005/login
  Register for Lake County emergency notifications:
  https://member.everbridge.net/453003085619442/login
- Set up a neighborhood text tree that lets you send information rapidly via text during an emergency.
- Reach out and help elderly or disabled neighbors with any of the above wildfire resiliency tasks. A crew of neighbors can achieve a lot in just a few hours.
- Collaborate with neighbors on improving emergency access by trimming and clearing shared ingress/egress.
- Consider renting a roll-away dumpster with neighbors to dispose of trash and/or brush debris.

Preparing our homes and communities for wildfire resiliency is a shared responsibility. We all can play a role to lower our risks and build stronger community relationships.

Good luck, stay safe, and have FUN!!!

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