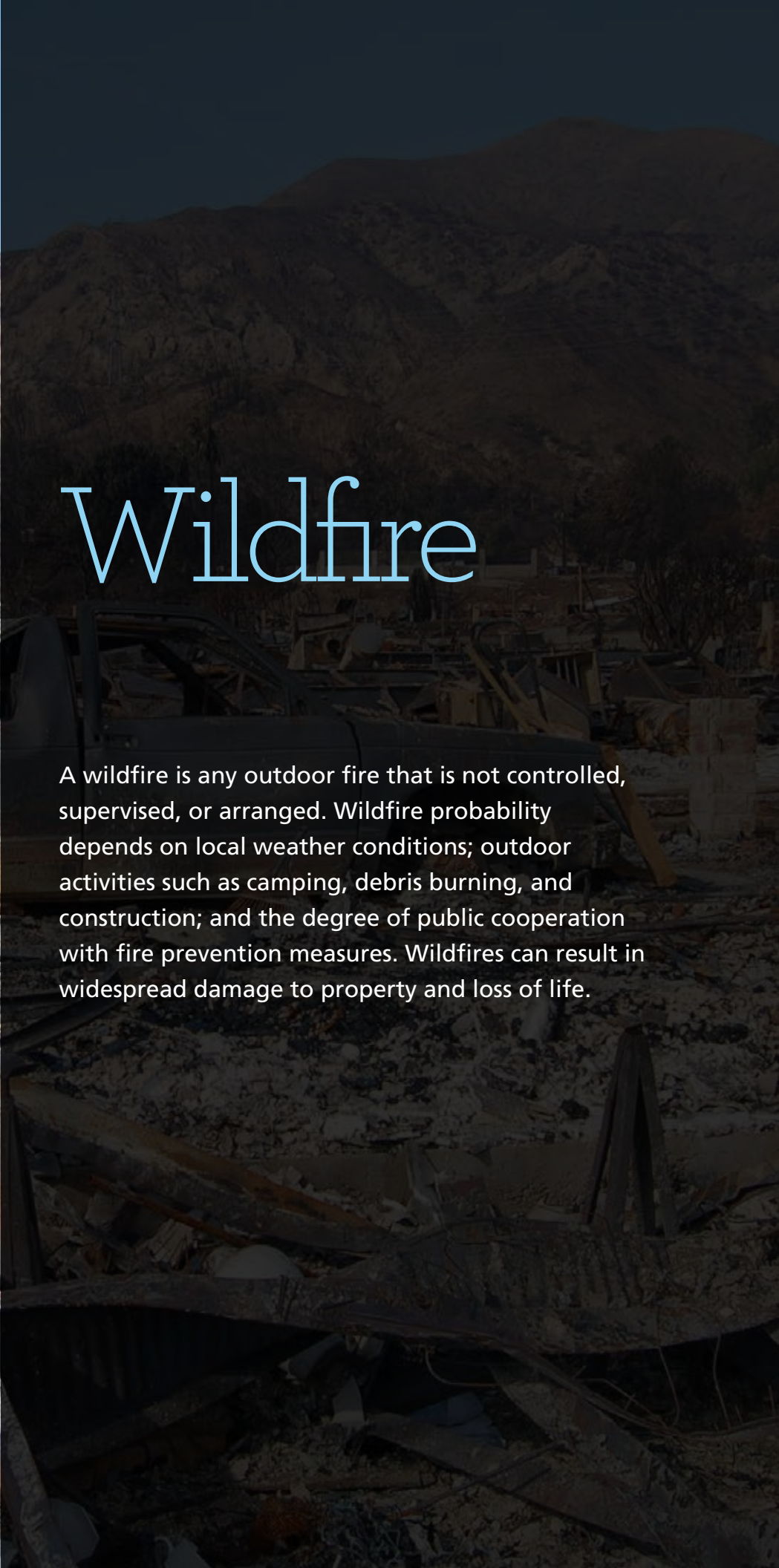




Wildfire

A wildfire is any outdoor fire that is not controlled, supervised, or arranged. Wildfire probability depends on local weather conditions; outdoor activities such as camping, debris burning, and construction; and the degree of public cooperation with fire prevention measures. Wildfires can result in widespread damage to property and loss of life.



Local Planning and Regulations

WF-1 Map and Assess Vulnerability to Wildfire

FEMA Resources/Publications
FEMA P-754

The first step in local planning is to identify wildfire hazard areas and assess overall community vulnerability. Potential actions include:

- Using GIS mapping of wildfire hazard areas to facilitate analysis and planning decisions through comparison with zoning, development, infrastructure, etc.
- Developing and maintaining a database to track community vulnerability to wildfire.
- Creating a wildfire scenario to estimate potential loss of life and injuries, the types of potential damage, and existing vulnerabilities within a community to develop wildfire mitigation priorities.

WF-2 Incorporate Wildfire Mitigation in the Comprehensive Plan

Communities can review comprehensive plans to ensure wildfire mitigation has been addressed. The comprehensive plan may include the following:

- Recognizing the existence of wildfire hazards and identifying areas of risk based on a wildfire vulnerability assessment.
- Describing policies and recommendation for addressing wildfire risk and discouraging expansion in the wildland-urban interface.
- Including considerations of wildfire hazards in land use, public safety, and other elements of the comprehensive plan.

WF-3 Reduce Risk through Land Use Planning

Local governments can mitigate future losses by regulating development in wildfire hazard areas through land use planning, including:

- Using zoning and/or a special wildfire overlay district to designate high-risk areas and specify the conditions for the use and development of specific areas.
- Addressing density and quantity of development, as well emergency access, landscaping and water supply.
- Promoting conservation of open space or wildland-urban boundary zones to separate developed areas from high-hazard areas.
- Setting guidelines for annexation and service extensions in high-risk areas.

WF-4 Develop a Wildland-Urban Interface Code

Communities can develop regulations for safer construction and incorporate mitigation considerations into the permitting process.

Potential actions include:

- Developing specific design guidelines and development review procedures for new construction, replacement, relocation, and substantial improvement in wildfire hazard areas.
- Addressing fire mitigation through access, signage, fire hydrants, water availability, vegetation management, and special building construction standards.
- Involving fire protection agencies in determining guidelines and standards and in development and site plan review procedures.
- Establishing wildfire mitigation planning requirements for large scale developments or planned unit developments.

WF-5 Require or Encourage Fire-Resistant Construction Techniques

FEMA Resources/Publications

FEMA P-737, P-754

A local government can encourage fire-resistant construction or may choose to require it through local regulations. Examples include:

- Encouraging the use of non-combustible materials (i.e., stone, brick, and stucco) for new construction in wildfire hazard areas.
- Using fire resistant roofing and building materials in remodels, upgrades, and new construction.
- Enclosing the foundations of homes and other buildings in wildfire-prone areas, rather than leaving them open and potentially exposing undersides to blown embers or other materials.
- Prohibiting wooden shingles/wood shake roofs on any new development in areas prone to wildfires.
- Encouraging the use of functional shutters on windows.

Structure and Infrastructure Projects

WF-6 Retrofit At-Risk Structures with Ignition-Resistant Materials

Existing structures in wildfire hazard areas can be protected through the use of non-combustible materials and technologies, including:

- Installing roof coverings, sheathing, flashing, skylights, roof and attic vents, eaves, and gutters that conform to ignition-resistant construction standards.
- Installing wall components that conform to ignition-resistant construction standards.
- Protecting propane tanks or other external fuel sources.
- Purchasing and installing external, structure-specific water hydration systems (sprinklers); dedicated power sources; and dedicated cisterns if no water source (e.g., lake, river, or swimming pool) is available.

WF-7 Create Defensible Space Around Structures and Infrastructure

Local governments can implement defensible space programs to reduce risk to structures and infrastructure, including:

- Creating buffers around residential and non-residential structures through the removal or reduction of flammable vegetation, including vertical clearance of tree branches.
- Replacing flammable vegetation with less flammable species.
- Creating defensible zones around power lines, oil and gas lines, and other infrastructure systems.

WF-8 Conduct Maintenance to Reduce Risk

Local governments can implement maintenance procedures to reduce wildfire risk, including:

- Performing arson prevention cleanup activities in areas of abandoned or collapsed structures, accumulated trash or debris, and with a history of storing flammable materials where spills or dumping may have occurred.
- Preventing or alleviating wildfires by proper maintenance and separation of power lines as well as efficient response to fallen power lines.
- Routinely inspecting the functionality of fire hydrants.
- Requiring and maintaining safe access for fire apparatus to wildland-urban interface neighborhoods and properties.

Natural Systems Protection

WF-9 Implement a Fuels Management Program

A fuels management program may be implemented to reduce hazardous vegetative fuels on public lands, near essential infrastructure, or on private lands by working with landowners. The program can include the following:

- Performing maintenance including fuel management techniques such as pruning and clearing dead vegetation, selective logging, cutting high grass, planting fire-resistant vegetation, and creating fuel/fire breaks (i.e., areas where the spread of wildfires will be slowed or stopped by the removal of fuels).
- Using prescribed burning to reduce fuel loads that threaten public safety and property.
- Identifying and clearing fuel loads created by downed trees.
- Cutting firebreaks into public wooded areas in the wildland-urban interface.
- Sponsoring local “slash and clean-up days” to reduce fuel loads along the wildland-urban interface.
- Linking wildfire safety with environmental protection strategies (i.e., improving forest ecology, wildlife habitat, etc.).
- Developing a vegetation management plan.

Education and Awareness Programs

WF-10 Participate in Firewise Program

The Firewise program provides a series of steps that individual residents and their neighbors can take to keep their homes and neighborhoods safer from fire. Consider actions such as:

- Joining the “Firewise Communities/USA” recognition program sponsored by the National Wildlife Coordinating Group (firewise.org).
- Sponsoring Firewise workshops for local officials, developers, civic groups, and neighborhood/homeowners’ associations.
- Consulting Firewise guidance and encouraging or requiring best practices in your community.

WF-11 Increase Wildfire Risk Awareness

Education and outreach programs can target citizens, businesses, developers, landscapers, and insurers among others to increase awareness of wildfire risk and strategies for protecting homes and infrastructure. Consider actions such as:

- Offering GIS hazard mapping online for residents, developers, and design professionals.
- Organizing a local fire department tour to show local elected officials and planners the most vulnerable areas of the community’s wildland-urban interface and increase their understanding of risks.
- Working with insurance companies, utility providers, and others to include wildfire safety information in materials provided to area residents.
- Developing partnerships with neighborhood groups, homeowners’ associations, and others to conduct outreach activities.
- Using local fire departments to conduct education programs in schools.
- Informing the public about proper evacuation procedures.
- Forming a citizen plan implementation steering committee to monitor progress of local mitigation actions. Include a mix of representatives from neighborhoods, local businesses, and local government.

WF-12 Educate Property Owners about Wildfire Mitigation Techniques

Educate property owners on actions that they can take to reduce risk to property, such as the following:

- Installing fire mitigation systems such as interior and exterior sprinkler systems.
- Performing safe disposal of yard and household waste rather than open burning.
- Removing dead or dry leaves, needles, twigs, and combustibles from roofs, decks, eaves, porches, and yards.
- Creating a defensible space or buffer zone cleared of combustible materials around property.
- Installing and maintaining smoke detectors and fire extinguishers on each floor of their homes or other buildings.
- Safely using and storing necessary flammable materials, including machine fuels. Approved safety cans should be used for storing gasoline, oily rags, and other flammable materials. Firewood should be stacked at least 100 feet away and uphill from homes.
- Keeping flammables, such as curtains, secured away from windows or using heavy fire-resistant drapes.

Other wildfire-related mitigation actions may also apply to other hazards. See the section entitled “Multiple Hazards” for other possible ideas..

