



Firewise Maryland: Wildland-Urban Interface Outreach, Education, and Planning

In recent years, as more and more people have built houses in or near the forest, a zone has been created where homes intermingle with wildland fuels. This zone is called the Wildland-Urban Interface, and is an area where homes and lives are at high risk of the dangers associated with wildfires. Likewise, since humans cause 98% of the fires in Maryland, the Wildland-Urban Interface is an area where the risk of wildland fire ignitions is increased. While fire can play an important role in forest ecosystems, it can also cause incredible damage if it becomes too intense: killing trees and wildlife, increasing the forests' susceptibility to soil erosion, and causing great destruction to homes and lives in the Wildland-Urban Interface.



A Wildland-Urban Interface home, with poor defensible space



The destruction that a wildfire can cause in the Wildland-Urban Interface.

For this reason, the Firewise Maryland Program of the Maryland DNR Forest Service has targeted the Wildland-Urban Interface as an area where efforts are needed to promote fire awareness and prevention through community outreach and education. These efforts include instructing homeowners how to make their homes more resistant to fire by creating defensible space, maintaining a debris-free yard, and using flame-resistant building materials. Other outreach efforts focus on preventing wildfire by educating people on how to burn debris and dispose of

wood stove ashes properly, and be wise with all heat, flame, and fuel sources.

The Firewise Maryland Program will also prepare Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for at-risk Wildland-Urban Interface communities. A CWPP is a comprehensive plan that assesses the wildfire risk in a community, details activities that community residents can choose to take to mitigate their wildfire risk, and provides guidance for firefighters responding to a fire in the community. CWPPs can also be written for planned developments before they are built, so that communities can be firewise from the start.

The expansion of the Wildland-Urban Interface is inevitable, but we can take an active role in reducing the threat of wildfire, while at the same time protecting the environment and allowing people to have their dream home in the woods. For more information on the Firewise Maryland Program, call **301-791-4010**, or visit **www.dnr.maryland.gov/firewise.asp**.



The effects of an intense wildland fire can still be seen one year later in the area to the left.