



# The **TRUMPET**

A publication from the Kansas Office of the State Fire Marshal | Spring 2016

## SPECIAL EDITION:

# STOPPING WILDFIRES

Spring Cleaning Chemical Safety ♦ Fire Pit Safety ♦ Storm Readiness

Special Section: Wildfire Prevention and Protection ♦ Poster Contest Winners

# FROM THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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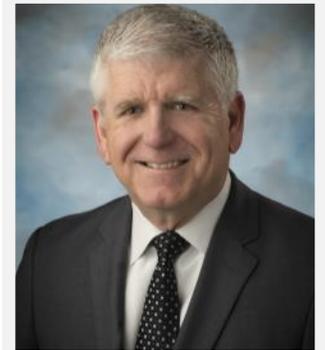
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### STAY CONNECTED



## Springtime Means Spring Burning

Springtime is here! And with that warmer weather comes the time when Kansas farmers and ranchers turn their attentions toward the task of performing prescribed burning and brush-burning on their properties.



Burning fields safely and properly is essential to prevent wildfires. Prescribed burning gone awry is only one cause of wildfires in Kansas, and in this issue we focus on ways you can be part of the solution and protect yourself and property from wildfires.



Spring is also the time when we move our clocks up an hour to Spring Forward for Daylight Savings Time, and as always we will be reminding everyone to use this occasion to check the batteries on their smoke detectors.

We hope you'll enjoy this issue and please share it with friends, family and co-workers.

Sincerely,

**Doug Jorgensen**  
Kansas State Fire Marshal



This issue's cover photo was contributed by Kansas photographer Chad Wittenberg. His photos are available on his [website](#).



# HOT NEWS



## Wally Roberts named new OSFM Chief of Investigations

Wally Roberts has been named the new Chief of Investigations at the Office of the State Fire Marshal, succeeding Rose Rozmiarek who recently retired. His appointment comes 15 years to the month since he first joined the OSFM as an investigator.

During his 15 year career with OSFM, Wally has worked over a thousand fire investigations throughout Kansas. In 2014, he was promoted to Investigation Supervisor and has supervised four investigators in Eastern Kansas. [Full article](#)



## OUR MISSION

The agency's mission is to reduce the deaths, injuries, and property losses of Kansans through inspection, enforcement, regulation, investigation, education, hazardous material and search & rescue incident responses.

## OSFM Welcomes Josh Zielke, Fire Prevention Inspector



Josh Zielke has just joined the OSFM Prevention Team as a Fire Prevention Specialist. He will be performing fire safety inspections in Johnson, Douglas, Linn and Miami counties.

[Full article.](#)

## OUR PURPOSE

To reduce the deaths, injuries, and property losses of Kansans through:

- Inspection
- Enforcement
- Plans Review
- Fireworks and Explosives Regulation
- Investigation
- Hazardous material incident mitigation
- Public education
- Coordination of search and rescue efforts

## Jeremy Fudge joins OSFM as Deputy Boiler Inspector

Jeremy Fudge has joined the OSFM team as a Deputy Boiler Inspector, working out of his home in Humboldt (Allen County). Prior to joining our agency, Jeremy worked as a welder for 18 years – 13 of which in the piping industry. During this time, he worked extensively with boilers and pressure vessels. His career has given him experience in the energy producing industries such as nuclear, natural gas, wind turbine manufacturing, and oil refineries. [Full article.](#)



## The TRUMPET

### EDITOR

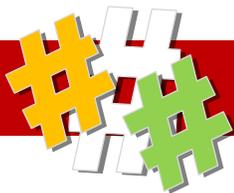
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### SUBMISSIONS

For information on receiving the State Fire Marshal Trumpet or to submit your meeting notices, training announcements, articles, photos, or other information, please contact [Kevin Doel](#).

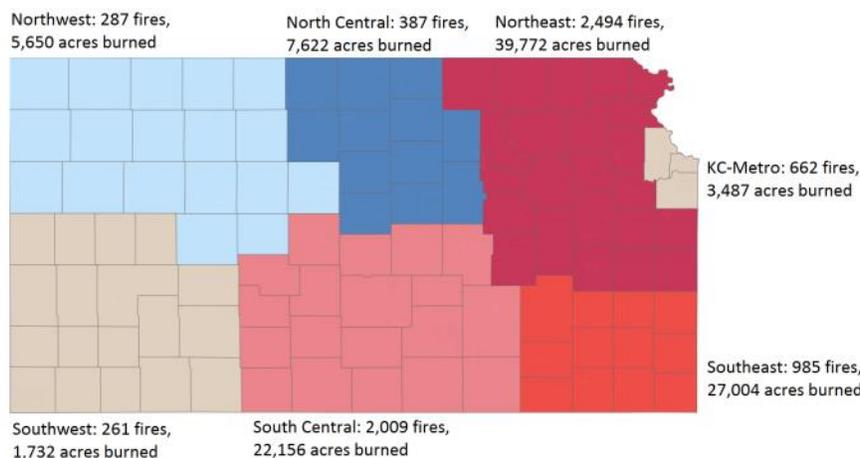
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# BY THE NUMBERS

In 2015, **107,307** acres of vegetation were burned across Kansas, including both incendiary and non-incendiary fires.



NFIRS/Homeland Security Regions—Stats current 2/16/2016



It's time for spring cleaning, but before you pull out the spray bottles and solvents, consider the hazards those cleaning chemicals may present. In 2012, the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a non-profit public-health advocacy in Washington, D.C., released its "Cleaners Hall of Shame" — a list of popular cleaning supplies that may potentially pose a hazard to your health.

According to the EWG's research team, which consists of toxicologists, chemists, public health officials and lawyers, many common household cleaners that claim to be safe or non-toxic could be harmful, especially to kids who might ingest them or breathe in their fumes. Many products contain ingredients that have been banned in other countries for links to ailments including blindness and cancer, according to the EWG, and others have been "greenwashed," meaning that contrary to their marketing claims, they are not actually environmentally friendly. Other products simply do not offer enough information about their ingredients to make an informed judgment about their safety, the EWG said.

[Click here to get the full list of the EWG Cleaners Hall of Shame.](#)

## 4 Spring Cleaning Chemical Safety Tips

### 1. Read the Label

Another way to say this rule is to "use as directed." The cleaning product's label will tell you how to use it safely and effectively.

instance, do not mix chlorine bleach with either vinegar or ammonia. If you do it will create a poisonous gas.

with skin, or any contact with eyes. Store your household cleaners in a cool, dry place.

### 2. Do Not Mix Cleaning Products Together

Mixing cleaning products can create dangerous and poisonous fumes. This is true for homemade cleaning products as well. For

### 3. Store Your Cleaning Products Safely

Keep your cleaning products away from children and pets, because many of them are dangerous if ingested or if they come in to prolonged contact

### 4. Dispose of Your Home Cleaning Products Properly

When you finish with a cleaning product you need to make sure you dispose of it properly. Many times the label itself will explain any specific rules for disposal. Follow them (see Rule 1 above).



Fire pits are a fantastic addition to any homestead or rural backyard. They are attractive, inexpensive to use and help to extend the use of your yard. But when you use a fire pit you are literally playing with fire! Careless misuse could not only set your own house ablaze, but also could spark a grass fire and endanger others nearby.

### Positioning Your Fire Pit

Whether you are using a portable fire pit or planning to install a permanent one, positioning is key to safety:

- Make sure the fire pit is, at minimum, 10 feet away from any structure or neighboring yard—25 feet is preferable.
- Do not position a fire pit under a covered porch or low hanging tree branches.
- Always place a fire pit on a non-flammable surface, such as patio blocks or concrete.
- Do not put a fire pit on a wooden deck or directly on grass.

### Preparing Your Fire Pit

- Clear all flammable materials away from your fire pit before using it. Five feet is a good distance. This “break” in vegetation will help prevent an escaped fire from spreading.
- Piling dirt or rocks around the pit will also help prevent any

- fire on the ground from escaping.
- The fire pit should be at least 6 inches deep at the center and 2 feet across, to help keep the embers and flames contained.

### Lighting Your Fire Pit

- Always check wind direction before you light a fire and remove anything flammable downwind of the pit.
- If it is too windy, do not light your fire pit.
- Do not use lighter fluid to light a fire pit; instead, a commercial fire starter stick with kindling on top is ideal.
- Do not use any flammable fluids (gasoline, lighter fluid, etc.) to light or relight fires.



# Be Prepared for Spring Storms



*As all Kansans should know by now, when it comes to weather, be prepared for anything!*

“With the onset of Spring comes a perfect time to create or review emergency plans to be ready for any incident that can impact your home or community,” said Doug Jorgensen, State Fire Marshal. “Whether it’s tornadoes, flash flooding, power outages or home fires, knowing what to do during an emergency is crucial.”

Our office offers the following tips to be safe during stormy weather.

## Know Your Risk

Kansas’ springtime hazards include tornadoes, thunderstorms, floods, and, yes, even snowstorms through early spring.

## Be Ready for Twisters

In case of tornado, remember to DUCK!

**D – Go DOWN** to the lowest level

**U – Get UNDER** something (like a basement staircase or heavy table or desk)

**C – COVER** your head

**K – KEEP** in shelter until the storm has passed

A tornado warning is issued by the National Weather Service when a tornado has been detected by Doppler radar or sighted by storm spotters. If a tornado warning is issued for your area, do not stop to take pictures or shoot video. Seek safe shelter immediately. Continue to listen to your NOAA Weather Radio or TV or radio newscasts for up-to-date weather information.

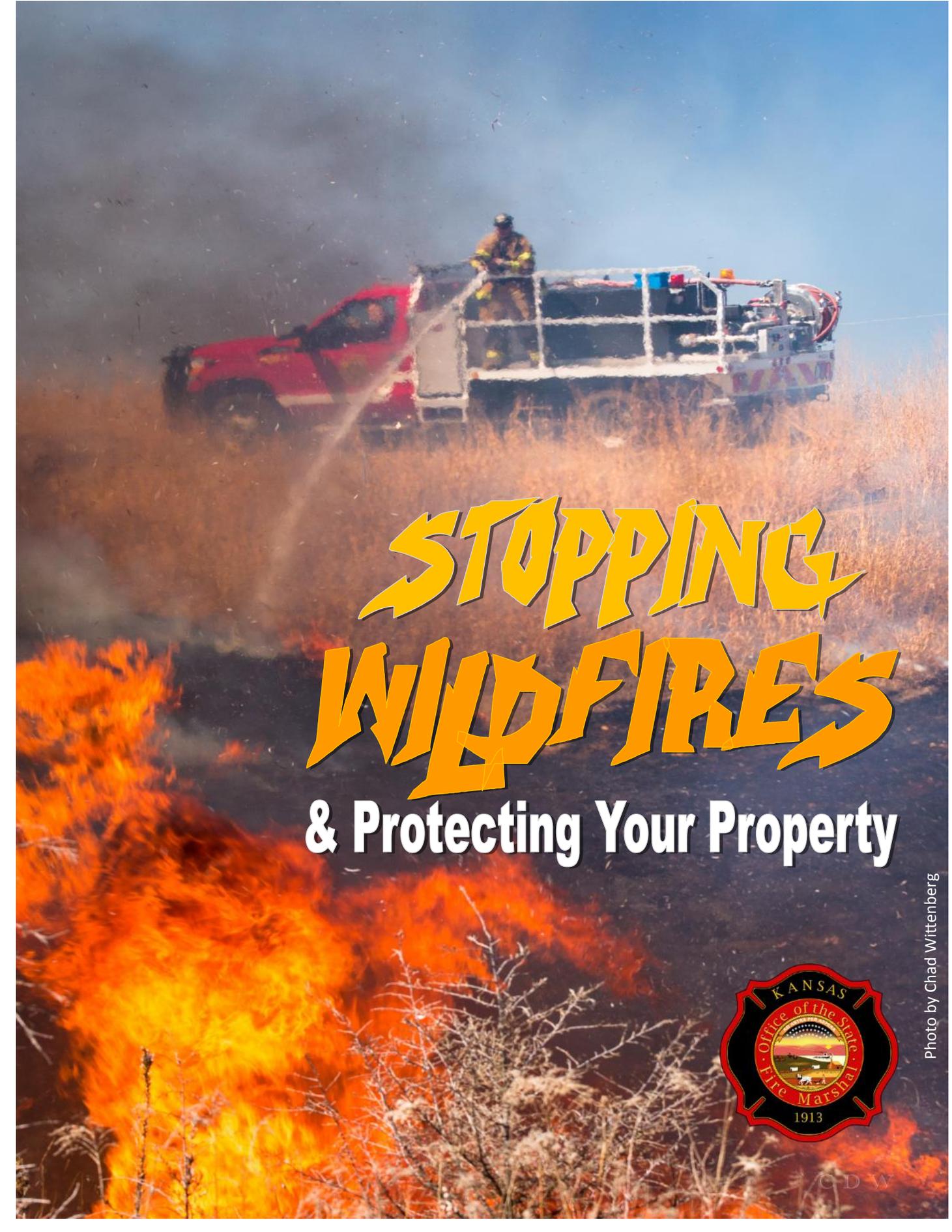
## Lightning Safety

According to the National Weather Service, each year lightning causes about 4,400 home structure fires, 12 fire-related deaths and \$1 billion in damages. Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall. Because of this, many lightning deaths occur ahead of storms or after storms seemingly

have passed.

### During a lightning storm:

- Unplug appliances and other electrical items, such as computers, and turn off air conditioners. If you are unable to unplug them, turn them off. Stay off corded phones, computers, and other electronic equipment that put you in direct contact with electricity or plumbing.
- Avoid washing your hands, bathing, doing laundry or washing dishes.
- If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance of lightning. Look for shelter inside a home, large building, or a hard-topped vehicle right away. Do not go under tall trees for shelter. There is no place outside that is safe during a thunderstorm. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder before leaving your shelter.
- Stay away from windows and doors.



# STOPPING WILDFIRES

& Protecting Your Property



Photo by Chad Wittenberg

The fire season is now a year-round reality in many areas, requiring firefighters and residents to be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfire throughout the year.

Each year, wildfires consume hundreds of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Studies show that as many as 80 percent of the homes lost to wildfires could have been saved if their owners had only followed a few simple fire-safe practices. In addition, wildfire-related deaths occur because people wait too late to leave their homes.

Your fire department takes every precaution to help protect you and your

property from wildfire. However, the reality is that in a major wildfire, there will simply not be enough fire engines or firefighters to defend every home.

Successfully preparing for a wildfire requires **you** to take personal responsibility for protecting yourself, your family and your property. In this special section of *The Trumpet*, we hope to give you the tips and tools you need to prepare and be successful.

Wildfires, fueled by a build-up of dry vegetation and drive by seasonal hot, dry winds, are extremely dangerous and impossible to control.

However, many residents have built their homes and landscaped without fully understanding the impact a fire could have on them, and few have adequately prepared their families for a quick evacuation.

It's not a question of *if* but *when* the next major wildfire will occur. That's why the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but you.

Through advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for wildfire.

# Plan now to prevent wildfires



# The Growing Wildfire Problem in Kansas

Kansas has between 4,500 and 9,000 fires in vegetation a year. The amount of fires and acres burned in Kansas follows a multi-year cycle. While some years have less fires, they often build into much larger amounts the following year. The good news is that on average, 53% of all fires a year burn under one acre. The bad news is that high call volume tires out the members of the Fire Service, adds wear and tear to emergency vehicles, and even the smallest fires threaten structures and lives.

## Human Factors in Wildfire



Photo by Chad Wittenberg

Floating embers love tall, dry grass. This hazard isn't just for those who live in the country. If your city allows backyard burning, take a look at vegetation growing close to your house, too.



Photo by Andover Fire Department

Inappropriate burning practices often lead to fire spread. Easy preparation tips can prevent this problem.



Photo by Chad Wittenberg

Small controlled burns quickly get out of control with poor planning and management.

Most fires are completely preventable. Roughly 3% of fires are attributed to fully natural causes such as lightning, high wind knocking lines down, and animals. The largest amount of fires are started by "controlled" or planned fires which either rekindled or spread out of control. These fires could have started out as simple backyard fire pits for entertaining or burning a pile of dead leaves and limbs after cleaning up a yard. Floating embers can quickly spread to dry, overgrown vegetation and shifting winds can push heat and flames where people never meant for them to go.

## Wildfire effects are closer to home than you may realize



Photo by Kickapoo Fire Department

Fire won't stop at the fence line. Even for those who don't plan on burning, preparing for wildfire is important. Your neighbor's fire can become your own.



A dozen fire departments worked a 1,500 acre fire with multiple structures in harm's way. No one was left to respond to 4 other grass fires.



Multiple grass fires left only one firefighter to fight a greenhouse fire. Strained resources increase response times and more danger for all calls.

# Create Defensible Space

**D**efensible space is the space between a structure and the wildland area that creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildland fire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential to protect a structure during a wildland fire.



## ZONE 1

### 0-30 feet around your home or to property line

- ◆ Use hard surfaces such as concrete or noncombustible rock mulch 0-5 feet around home.
- ◆ Use non-woody, low growing herbaceous vegetation. Succulent plants and ground covers are good choices.
- ◆ Store firewood and other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your home, garage or attached deck.
- ◆ Trim back touching or overhanging branches from the roof to a distance of at least 10 feet.

## ZONE 2

### 30-100 feet around your home or to property line

- ◆ Create vegetation groups, "islands," to break up continuous fuels around your home.
- ◆ Remove ladder fuels (those which allow fire to climb from the surface level into upper portions of trees).
- ◆ Remove leaf and needle debris from the yard.
- ◆ Keep grass and wildflowers under 8" in height.

## ZONE 3

### 100-200 feet around your home or to property line

- ◆ Create and maintain a minimum of 10 feet between the tops of trees.
- ◆ Remove ladder fuels, creating a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches to keep fire from climbing up trees.
- ◆ Remove dead trees and shrubs.

# Actions You Can Take Today

Preparing for a fire isn't just for living in rural communities. It's for anybody. Remember those 53% of fires that were smaller than one acre? Most of them were in backyards in cities. Even if you don't plan to burn leaves or have a backyard fire pit, fire spread can happen anyway. Use these easy tips to protect yourself from not only spreading wildfires but structure fires as well. The same principles will keep your property and your family safe.



Weed around the property regularly, especially areas that a lawn mower is not appropriate for (tall dry grasses, rocky terrain, etc.)



Remove leaf litter and other debris that accumulate around the building, under vegetation, and other collection areas.



Clean out leaves and other debris from guttering.



Remove leaf litter, straw and other debris from under and around propane tanks to create 10 feet of clearance around it.



Eliminate ladder fuels by pruning tree branches on trees around the property to within at least 6 feet of the ground.



Remove flammable materials from underneath the house, decks and porches. Common flammables include scrap-wood, firewood and combustible furniture.



Mow the lawn regularly to keep grasses shorter than 4 inches tall around the home. Never mow in dry vegetation.

# Residential Safety Checklist



## Defensible Space

**YES NO**

1. Is dead vegetation cleared to the recommended defensible space area? (Consider adding distance due to slope of property.)
2. Is there separation between shrubs?
3. Are ladder fuels removed?
4. Is there a clean and green area extending at least 30 feet from the house?
5. Is there a non-combustible area within five feet of the house?
6. Is there separation between trees and crowns?

## Emergency Access

**YES NO**

1. Is the street address visible from the street?
2. Is the home address made of fire-resistant materials?
3. Are street signs present at every intersection leading to the house?
4. Is flammable vegetation within 10 feet of the driveway cleared?
5. If a long driveway is present, does it have a suitable turnaround area?

## Home

**YES NO**

1. Does your home have a metal, composition or tile roof with capped ends and covered fascia?
2. Are the rain gutters and roof free of leaves, needles and branches?
3. Are all vent openings screened with 1/8" (or smaller) mesh metal screen?
4. Are approved spark arrestors on chimneys?
5. Does the house have non-combustible siding?
6. Are the eaves "boxed in" and the decks enclosed?
7. Are the windows made of at least double-paned or tempered glass?
8. Are the decks, porches, and other similar areas made of non-combustible material and free of easily combustible material?
9. Is all firewood at least 30 feet from the house?

# My Personal Wildfire Action Plan

Write up your Wildfire Action Plan and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

During High Fire Danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information on wildfires and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildfire.



Important Phone Numbers:

Out of state Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

County Emergency Communication Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Sheriff's Department: \_\_\_\_\_



Evacuation Route:

\_\_\_\_\_

Where to go: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Location of emergency supply kit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Hot Links for More Information

[State Fire Marshal Wildfire Prevention Information](#)    [Wildfire Today](#)

[Kansas Forestry Division](#)

[Kansas Flint Hills Smoke Management](#)

# Winners! Statewide Fire Safety Contest

Governor Sam Brownback and State Fire Marshal Doug Jorgensen honored the winners of our statewide Fire Safety Poster Contest at a special ceremony in the Governor's office on February 26, 2016.



Evan Ringwald, winner of the 3rd-4th Grade category, shows off his winning poster while Madi Phelps, Honorable Mention winner in the 5th-6th Grade category, and Eric Sjogren, principal of Ellinwood Grade School, looks on.



Governor Brownback admires the work of Lauren Schutter, winner of the 5th-6th Grade category.



Reece Stickney, winner of the K-2nd Grade category, presents her winning poster to Governor Brownback and Fire Marshal Jorgensen.



L-R: Reece Stickney, Evan Ringwald, Governor Brownback, Madi Phelps, and Lauren Schutter

## Congratulations to the winners!

- Reece Stickney, Ellinwood, Kansas (K-2nd Grade Category)
- Evan Ringwald, Ellinwood, Kansas (3rd-4th Grade Category)
- Lauren Schutter, Alma, Kansas (5th-6th Grade Category)

To view all the winning posters, visit [FireMarshal.ks.gov/postercontest](http://FireMarshal.ks.gov/postercontest)