

# **It Works!**



**Forest thinning and prescribed fire is the proven way to reduce damage from destructive wildfires around Flagstaff!**

## **The Threat**

Wildfire is the #1 fire threat to the greater Flagstaff area. A century of fire suppression, industrial logging and intense grazing has created unnaturally dense forests. Fire is a natural part of our Ponderosa pine ecosystem but it can now burn with ferocious and destructive intensity in untreated stands.



*Destructive crown fires are increasingly more common in dense, untreated forest stands.*

## **The Solution**

Flagstaff Fire Department began its Wildland Fire Management Program in 1996 to protect the community and our "Values-At-Risk". By treating forests with thinning and prescribed fire, we work to reduce the risk of destructive wildfire and promote healthy forests within and surrounding the city.

The Flagstaff Fire Department works to protect the community in five core areas:

- 1) Prevention – Create and maintain *Firewise* neighborhoods developments through application of the City’s Wildland Urban Interface Fire code.
- 2) Preparedness – Motivate and assist individuals, groups, and others to prepare themselves, their families, homes, properties and neighborhoods to survive destructive wildfire.
- 3) Hazard Mitigation – Manage unnatural fuel regimes (condition, amount, type and location) and restore forest health so as to reduce the likelihood of destructive wildfire.
- 4) Response – Develop and sustain a readiness posture capable of delivering effective, efficient, and safe protection to our community as well as providing requested assistance to our many partners.
- 5) Recovery – Actions to ensure site rehabilitation, financial reimbursements, etc.

## **The Result**

Since 1996 a great amount of land around Flagstaff has been treated. The threat of destructive wildfire has been reduced, although much work remains. Recent fires burning in or into treated stands burned less intensely, providing a place where firefighters could safely and effectively stop fires, and protect our community.

In these treated areas, fire behavior was greatly reduced. Fires in untreated areas easily climbed into tree tops where they burned intensely, moved with rapid speed, and killed many trees.

## **Two Success Stories!**

The 120-acre Woody Fire of 2006 is an example of the effectiveness of thinning dense stands of trees and the use of prescribed fire in protecting the community. This fire began along I-40 where it quickly gained momentum in an untreated

stand. The Woody Fire quickly became a running crown fire and swiftly moved toward Flagstaff: until it reached areas treated with thinning and prescribed fire!



*The Woody Fire burned intensely through dense untreated stands near town until reaching areas treated with thinning and prescribed fire.*

As the Woody Fire burned toward Flagstaff, it approached an area previously treated with thinning and prescribed fire. This area allowed firefighters to use tactics that effectively stopped the fire's progression. Choosing to fight fire with fire, forest fuels were intentionally burned out in front of the approaching flame front. Reaching this point, the fire lost strength and dropped to the ground. Although contained, the fire continued to cast flaming embers across fire lines creating small spot fires in treated areas where they could easily be controlled and prevented from continuing the fire's march toward developed areas.

In 2010, virtually the same thing happened with the nearly 300-acre Hardy Fire. Growing quickly, it forced the evacuation of many, threatening schools, businesses, and a large residential area. But, using a previously thinned area directly in the approach path as a safe buffer area, firefighters intentionally

burned out forest fuels. As with the Woody Fire, the Hardy Fire then lost strength and dropped to the ground. Embers thrown across the fire lines were easily contained and the fire was stopped.



*Un-thinned stand: note level of damage even though fire burned downhill in this location.*



*Thinned stand: little fire damage*

## **The Facts**

To protect our community we must create a *Firewise* landscape around Flagstaff. Selective tree thinning, prescribed fire, and individual home-and-property owner actions are critical for our community to survive and thrive.

## **What Can You Do?**

1. **Start by creating and maintaining a Defensible Property by:**
  - a) **Thinning and pruning trees and shrubs**
  - b) **Mowing grass and weeds**
  - c) **Properly disposing of debris.**
2. **Remove trees growing through your deck or roof.**
3. **Remove pine needles from roof and rain-gutters.**
4. **Remove tree branches which overhang within 15 feet of the chimney.**
5. **Stack firewood, hay bales, and other flammable items uphill or on a contour a minimum of 30 feet from your home.**
6. **Utilize non-combustible roofing material.**
7. **Replace damaged foundation and eave screens.**
8. **Post name and address signs so they are clearly visible from the road.**
9. **Ensure driveway has adequate width and height clearance.**
10. **Install and test smoke detectors.**
11. **Practice a family fire drill and evacuation plan.**
12. **Have wood-burning appliances professionally inspected and cleaned on a regular basis.**
13. **Place ashes or BBQ briquettes in a covered metal container, cool for 2 days, then dispose of properly.**
14. **Contact the Fire Department to schedule a free wildfire safety inspection.**
15. **Create a FireWise Neighborhood by contacting your neighbors and treating the entire neighborhood.**

**For More Information:**



211 W. Aspen  
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(928) 213-2500  
or

[www.flagstaffaz.gov/wildlandfire](http://www.flagstaffaz.gov/wildlandfire)

[www.gffp.org](http://www.gffp.org)

[www.eri.nau.edu](http://www.eri.nau.edu)

[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

[www.azsf.az.gov](http://www.azsf.az.gov)

[www.cals.arizona.edu/firewise](http://www.cals.arizona.edu/firewise)



**Are You Prepared?**