

During the 1996 Miller's Reach fire near Big Lake, Alaska, over 400 structures were lost, but over 1,000 of the threatened structures survived. Many were saved through the efforts of firefighters and the community, and many more as a result of preparations made by the individual members of the community.

The first step to making your home fire resistant is education. The best resource for Alaskans is available through the Division of Forestry and is entitled "Firewise Alaska". This guide is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.forestry.alaska.gov/wildland>

Then click on the "Firewise Alaska" link.

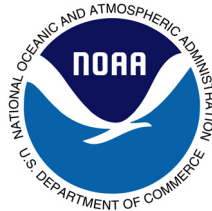
### What can you do to make your home resistant to wildfire?

- Evaluate your level of risk
  - How close are you to wild land?
  - How close are the trees to your home?
  - Is there an oil or propane tank nearby?
- Choose fire-safe materials when building or improving your home
  - Install a metal roof instead of cedar shake
- Identify or create an emergency water supply
- Make sure your home is easily accessible and identifiable to firefighters
- Make escape plans *before* an emergency to avoid panic and confusion
- Surround your home with fire resistant vegetation and landscaping.

Text and Tips adapted from "FireWise Alaska" by the Alaska Division of Forestry



Photo by John McClogan



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**Fire Weather**  
**and**  
**Safety**  
**for Alaskans**

**National Weather Service**

**Juneau, Alaska**



**Working Together  
 To Save Lives**

## The National Weather Service Fire Weather Program

### What is “Fire Weather”?

National Weather Service (NWS) Fire Weather Meteorologists play a vital role in efforts to combat wildfires all over the United States. NWS Forecasters issue a wide variety of products on the local scale to support fire agency planning and suppression efforts such as:

- Routine fire weather area forecasts
- Point forecasts to support the National Fire Danger Rating System
- Watches and warnings for critical fire weather events (Much like a Winter Weather Warning but for conditions that are conducive to fire starts or lead to uncontrollable behavior in an existing fire)
- Site specific “Spot” forecasts at the request of land management agencies for wildfires and prescribed burns.

These products are produced with the safety of fire crews and the general public in mind. So how can this information be used to keep you and your family safe? This brochure will provide information on how to stay safe during a time of extreme fire danger, as well as how to prevent wildfires.



### What is a “Red Flag Warning”?



A **Red Flag Warning** is a statement issued by the NWS Forecast Office and directed toward fire management agencies. This means that weather conditions are ideal for the ignition and rapid spread of wildfires. Extra caution should be used by the public to prevent wildfires during this time period.

### What should you do if a Red Flag Warning is issued for your area?

A Red Flag Warning issued by the NWS informs people within the warning area that they should use caution when dealing with anything that could pose as a fire hazard.

- Do not start a campfire or ignite a burn pile
- Do not burn trash
- Avoid using equipment such as a lawnmower, chainsaw, or any other implement that may emit sparks.
- Do not dispose of cigarette butts on the ground or outside of your car
- It is okay to use your grill, just have a water source nearby and do not dispose of the ashes until the Warning has been cancelled ***and the ashes are fully extinguished.***
- Watch for smoke nearby. If there is an unattended fire, report it immediately!

### To whom should you report a wildfire?

1. Call 911
2. (907) 586-8800 (Juneau Forest Service)

### Where can you find NWS Forecasts?

<http://www.weather.gov/arh/fire>

<http://fire.ak.blm.gov/>

### What if you are in the wilderness and do not have access to Weather Service products?

There are several ways to assess fire danger while spending time in a wooded area. Here are some signs that may indicate it is too dangerous to ignite a fire at a certain location:

- If the ground lacks snow or the local vegetation is not green, that means that the area is burnable if the “fuels” are dry enough.
- To determine whether the fuels are dry enough - Grab a medium-sized stick from the ground. If it snaps immediately when you try to bend it, then this means that what is on the ground is very dry and a fire would have plenty of fuel to keep it going once started.
- If you see cauliflower shaped clouds, hear thunder, see lightning, but do not feel any rain then you may be experiencing a “Dry Thunderstorm,” which can be very dangerous if the fuels are burnable.



- Wind is a key element in Fire Weather Prediction. Wind, when strong enough, can spread fire a great distance in a short period of time. An example of a strong wind would be when it causes large tree branches to move. If any of the above signs are accompanied by strong wind, firefighters will have a more difficult time bringing a fire under control.