



Are trees or shrubs touching the house? Are tree canopies touching? Have you stacked firewood on the deck, porch or against the house?

- **Protect the community.** Well-designed fuel breaks should separate homes. Subdivisions and neighborhoods can implement a phone tree to notify each other.
- **Create access for emergency responders.** Ensure your address is clearly marked to the right of the driveway so emergency services can see it. Ensure the driveway has good turnabout space for large emergency vehicles.
- **Have an evacuation plan.** Plan how you will get your family and animals to safety in case of wildfire.

Can doing these proactive tasks save a house threatened by wildfire? Ryan and Christine Hodek say yes. The Hodeks applied wildfire prevention guidelines—from fireproof materials, landscaping, maintenance and even lawn furniture—when they built their home in the wooded hills in Rist Canyon, Colorado.

In 2012, when the High Park Fire threatened their neighborhood, the Hodeks and all their neighbors evacuated. When they returned, 294 homes had been destroyed, but the Hodeks' home was untouched by the fire.

In spring when plants are still green is a good time to get out and do pruning, trimming and cleanup work,

says Al Crouch, a fire mitigation/education specialist with the Bureau of Land Management's Vale District.

"When it gets hot and dry, it's almost too late," he says.

Al encourages homeowners to reduce ignition sources by mowing grass and trimming branches before it's dry. Chainsaws and motorized or wheeled equipment can spark and cause wildfires.

"It's important for landowners to take responsibility and make their structures survivable to fire," Al says. "Make your site and structures defensible without the presence of a firefighter."

PROTECT YOUR HOME WITH SEASONAL CLEANUP

- Eliminate the fire threat for the first 5 to 10 feet adjacent to the house, which is the most critical zone.
- Remove material that could fuel a fire if airborne embers land on or near your house or outbuildings. Remove pine needles and dry leaves from the gullies of the roof, gutters, decks and porches.
- Cover vents with fine-mesh screen to prevent debris and firebrands from entering the vent and igniting the house.
- Don't stack firewood on the deck, porch or next to the house.
- Plant trees that are leaf succulent and hold moisture.
- Prune branches that are close to the ground.
- No trees should touch structures. Prune dead wood from trees and shrubs near the house and other structures.
- Buy fire-resistant outdoor furniture.
- Be mindful of structure-to-structure fire. Examine outbuildings that might threaten the house.

Oregon Trail Electric Co-op

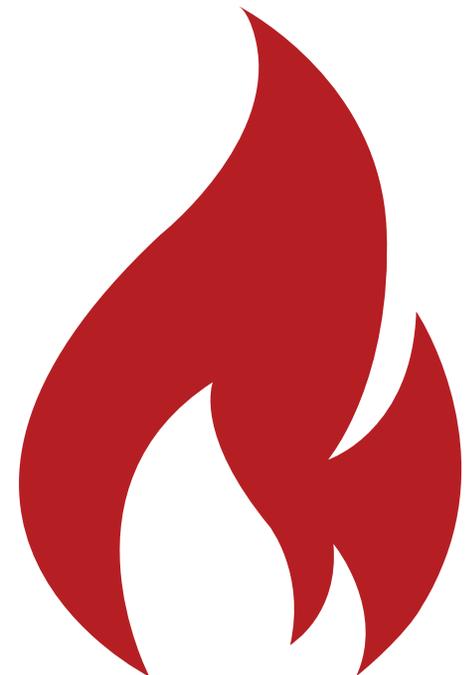
Phone: (541) 523-3616 **Outages:** 1-866-430-4265

Website: www.otec.coop

PREPARE AND PROTECT
YOUR HOME FROM FIRE



Your Touchstone Energy®
Cooperative 





Last year's wildfire season in Eastern Oregon began June 28. With the 2019 wildfire season upon us, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative members still have time to protect their homes and outbuildings from the threat of wildfire with simple seasonal maintenance.

Statewide in 2018, Oregon Department of Forestry handled 1,113 wildland fires covering 76,739 acres, according to Jamie Knight, Oregon Department of Forestry public information officer in La Grande. The number of fires caused by humans as well as those caused by lightning strikes increased.

Disaster movies might lead us to believe it's a wildfire's 100-foot-tall flames that destroy houses. But that's not true. It's usually the tiny, burning embers—called firebrands—projected through the air ahead of the flames that land on dry fuel that ignite structures.

"It's not the flame front that gets us, it's the embers that catch fire to the leaves in gutters," says Gary Timm, deputy director with Baker County Emergency Management. "If fire embers are burning toward a home, subdivision or urban area, those embers could be a mile ahead of the flames, depending on how much thermal lift there is."

Seasonal maintenance tips include keeping dead fuels and debris away from your home's exterior, including roof, deck, porch, gutters and outbuildings.

"Look for any place where the wind whips leaves and pine needles and causes them to collect," Jamie says. "That creates fuel for wildfires. If you have a buildup of fuel, if an ember lands there, it causes structure loss."

In a wildfire, dry fuels on or adjacent to the house ignite quickly. A bed of pine needles can ignite in nine seconds. Pine needles in a gutter ignite in about 1 minute. A PVC gutter can melt and collapse in a little less than three minutes.



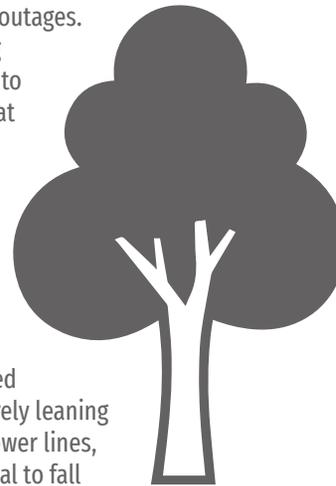
RIGHT-OF-WAY PLANT MAINTENANCE

Trees and vegetation in the utility's right-of-way can cause power outages and become fire hazards. Keeping power lines and meters clear of obstacles provides safe and dependable electricity for OTEC member-owners.

Trees falling into power lines are a leading source of blinks and outages. OTEC crews and tree-clearing contractors work year-round to identify and remove trees that can be a problem.

Members are always a good source of information for locating and reporting these types of problems. Members often contact the OTEC office to report dead trees, trees with decayed trunks or root systems, severely leaning or overhanging trees near power lines, and trees with a high potential to fall into a power line.

OTEC's yard-planting guide says all vegetation must be planted away from power lines so mature plants won't grow into the right-of-way. For those who live in a town, vegetation within 20 feet of either side of the power line may be removed during power line



maintenance, repair and replacement. In rural areas, vegetation must be at least 25 feet from either side of power lines.

CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE

To protect your home from wildfire, maintain barriers between structures and trees. Vegetation should be well maintained and fire resistant for 100 feet around a home. The first 5 to 10 feet adjacent to the home are most crucial.

"Federal, state and local firefighters need homeowners to do their part to create defensible space around the home prior to the fire season so responding fire crews can provide protection faster, safer and more successfully," Gary says.

He cites specific tasks homeowners can do to reduce the threat of wildfire to their home and outbuildings.

- **Consider how your home is constructed.** Is the siding fire resistant? Is the roof fire resistant? Metal roof and asphalt shingles are more fire resistant than shake roofs. The valleys of the roof can hold up to 20 pounds of pine cones to fuel a fire. Protect your vents with mesh screen to prevent debris and firebrands from entering your home.
- **Build defensible space around the home. If a fire approaches, can you defend your home?** What does the landscape look like 30 feet from the home and then 100 feet from the home? Is there green grass up to house, crushed rock or flammable bark mulch?