



Risk Management SERVICE AGENCY

Wildfires

There's no time like the present – prepare now!

Wildfires are no longer seasonal threats – they are year-round hazards. Local municipalities play a vital role in reducing fire risks and building long-term resilience to protect lives, reduce losses, and support quicker recovery. This guide outlines strategies to help prepare, mitigate risk, and respond effectively.

Community and infrastructure protection

- Maintain a defensible space – clear flammable vegetation within 30-100 ft of structures depending on your specific wildfire risk.
- Remove all brush/grass and debris from around buildings and propane tanks and other city spaces (even green vegetation can burn).
- Remove debris from gutters and roofs. Dead leaves and needles ignite easily.
- Trim trees to eliminate dead branches, known as “ladder fuel”, on the lower levels of trees.
- Use fire-resistant materials when developing new properties and other infrastructure.
- Identify and prioritize protection of your critical facilities such as water treatment plants, emergency shelters, central data/record hubs, and evacuation routes.
- Back-up all critical data at an off-site location.
- Set sprinklers on roofs and around your buildings. Keep hoses with a nozzle connected to water faucets.
- Keep portable equipment such as generators, pumps and chain saws fully fueled.

Emergency preparedness and planning

- Update and test emergency operations and evacuation plans annually.
- Connect and coordinate with your local fire protection district, county emergency management, state and federal fire agencies on wildfire planning, response, and protocols annually.
- Train staff on wildfire response and communications both internally and externally to the community.

Vegetation & fuel management

- Conduct regular brush clearing and controlled burns where permitted. Do this before peak fire

season and consider contract crews for high-risk areas.

- Create and maintain strategic fuel breaks around your municipality – these are open areas clear of wildfire fuel (dry, dead vegetation, plants, etc.). They help slow the spread of fires and can reduce fire intensity.
- Clear overgrown vegetation along roads and evacuation routes to assist evacuation and emergency response.
- Consider using GIS or asset management systems to track your work, identify priority areas and fire hydrants, and emergency routes.

Public education and engagement

- Promote the “Ready, Set, Go!” program.
- Share evacuation plans, mitigation tips, and local hazards maps with your community.
- Support and encourage private property mitigation with vegetation clearance ordinances in high-risk areas or during high-risk months or offer incentives to assist your community in creating their own defensible space.
- Partner with HOAs, schools, & local media outlets for outreach and communication campaigns.
- Be sure to utilize your own website and social media channels such as Facebook and others to keep your community informed.

Despite your best efforts to protect your property, a wildfire can still be a threat. As you prepare to quickly evacuate:

- Close all windows and other openings.
- Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner. If you do not have air conditioning and it is too hot to stay inside with closed windows, seek shelter elsewhere.
- Park vehicles with the front facing out to allow for quick evacuation.

Resources

Is your county/city/town at risk for wildfires?

View the Washington state [burn risk map](#).

Emergency management contact: [Find your city or county emergency manager](#)

Emergency planning at the local government level:

- [Local government emergency planning](#) – MRSC
- [Emergency planning 101](#) – MRSC
- [Local government emergency planning](#) – MRSC
- [Strengthening urban resilience to wildfire at the local level](#) – MRSC
- [Firefighting in the wildland inter-urban interface](#) – MRSC
- [Elected Officials' guide to emergency management](#) – WSEMA
- [Developing and maintaining emergency operations plans](#) – FEMA

Washington State Department of Natural Resources:

- [Wildfire information](#)
- [Wildfire preparedness](#)
- [Wildfire prevention](#)
- [Summary and plan](#) for the WA Wildland Fire Protection Strategy
- [Washington Community Wildfire Protection Plans – By county](#)

Washington State Emergency Management Division:

- [“Ready, Set, Go!” Evacuation tips](#)
- [“Ready, Set, Go!” Action Plan](#)
- [Preparedness](#)
- [Disaster assistance](#)
- [Grants](#)
- [Washington State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) – includes Wildfire Risk Index by county

Federal Emergency Management Agency

- [Emergency response](#)
- [Response & recovery](#)
- [IS-100 Intro to the Incident Command System](#)
- [IS-200.C: Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response](#)

**Report any damage to city/town property or any claims against the city/town immediately by calling RMSA Claims at (800) 562-8981 or after hours at (360) 753-3326 or e-mailing rmsa@awcnet.org.*