

# Cabin Fever and Firewise

It's cabin fever! Most Minnesotans have made summer in Minnesota official by opening up the family cabin. The doors have been opened to air it out, the spider webs swiped away, and the boat launched. Has the cabin been made Firewise?

**Firewise** is a program that was created to improve the ability of homes and cabins in wildland areas to survive a wildfire. Wildland areas include forests, heavy brush, open prairies, swamps, or as many Minnesotans call it "*Up North*".

Here are some **Firewise** tips to get you started.

First, know your Firewise lingo: Defensible space, it refers to that area between a house and an oncoming wildfire where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the wildfire threat and to provide an opportunity for firefighters to effectively defend the house or cabin. Sometimes, defensible space is simply a homeowner's properly maintained yard.

- **Create defensible space around your cabin. This area should extend 30' feet from the structure, but not exceed beyond the property line.**
- **Multiple large trees within the defensible space area should be trimmed so the tops are not touching. Tree clusters may be allowed if significant clear area is provided.**
- **Tree branches shall not extend over or under roof eaves and shall not be within fifteen (15) feet of a wood burning appliance chimney.**
- **Remove dead, diseased and weakened trees. Lower tree branches should be pruned to three times the height of any underlying shrubs or grass.**
- **Remove pine needles, leaves and debris from the ground and in-between brush and trees.**
- **Roofs and gutters must be kept clean from these materials.**
- **Keep grass and weeds mowed to a maximum height of 4 inches. Fire spreads rapidly in dry grass and weeds. Promptly dispose of leaves, branches and other debris.**
- **Do not use the area under decks for storage. Store firewood at least 15' away from the house/cabin and decks.**
- **Ensure your address is clearly marked and visible from the street.**
- **Install spark arresters over chimneys.**
- **Incorporate fire/fuel breaks in your landscaping. These include stone or concrete patios, ponds, rock paths and sidewalks.**
- **Plan and rehearse an escape plan. Be prepared to evacuate your cabin when directed by fire or police officials.**

These are just a few tips to help your second home in the woods survive a wildland or forest fire.

For more information put **Firewise** in your search engine.