



Comhairle Contae Chill Mhantáin
Wicklow County Council



Seirbhís Dóiteáin Chontae Chill Mhantáin
Wicklow County Fire Service

Advice for Property Owners to protect buildings from Wildfires

Introduction

- The risk from wildfires to property is increasing. Factors such as climate change, modern building methods (open plan design means houses are less compartmentalised), lightweight and composite building materials (often with a synthetic mix) and denser populations living nearer to the natural environment have significantly increased this risk.
- Wicklow County Fire Service has developed this guidance for homeowners living in a rural area or at the edge of a town or village (the rural / urban interface). The advice provided will assist property owners to better protect buildings from wildfire.



Create a Safety Zone around your Property

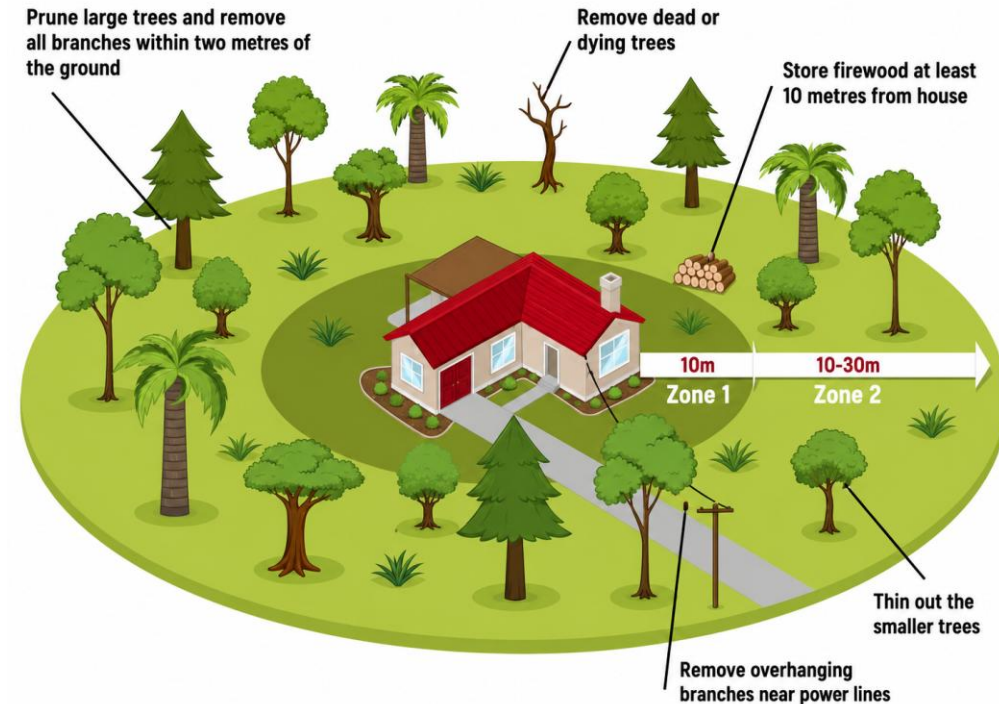
- If you live in a rural area, a wildfire safety zone around your property is one of your best defences. A simple cleared buffer area between a fire and a building can make a significant difference.
- A Safety Zone is a strip of land where trees, shrubs, and flammable materials are cleared away, creating a barrier between your home and a potential fire. This slows or stops fire spread, protecting your house and giving firefighters space and time to work.
- Remember, creating a safety zone is an ongoing task. Regular maintenance is key to keeping your home safe.



Kippure Valley, County Wicklow

How to make a safety zone around your home

- Keep a cleared zone 10 meters around your home.
- Remove woodpiles, leaves and combustible material.
- Mow grass regularly to maintain 75mm height max..
- Cut back trees and shrubs close to your home. Dispose of garden waste responsibly, don't throw cuttings onto adjacent land or let them dry out in your garden, it is fuel in a fire.
- Have a garden hose or another source of water ready.
- Trim back plants to create more space and reduce fire risk.



How to make a safety zone around your home

- Position any sheds or garden furniture away from your home.
- Compost heaps can be a source of grass fires. Keep compost heaps away from buildings and other structures. Keep your compost area moist.
- Put away outdoor furniture and covers when not in use.
- Use stone, cement, tiles and green grass to create a sterile area around your house so surface fires can't reach your house.
- Prune tree branches to a height of 2 meters so ground fire can't ignite them. Protect fuel tanks: Give tanks a 3-meter clear zone and store them on gravel or concrete.
- Talk to neighbours if you are concerned about their property. If you live closer than 30 meters from your neighbour, it is advisable to talk to them. What occurs on their property will impact on yours.



Check your Property

- Make sure you have clear escape routes from inside and outside the home.
- Clear flammable debris, like dead leaves, from your roofs and guttering.
- Repair any loose or broken roof tiles to prevent hot embers entering your roof space.
- Don't store flammable material under or against your house or deck (including flammable doormats).
- Be aware of power lines: Vegetation near power lines and electrical equipment poses a safety risk. Never try to cut back trees or bushes close to power lines. Use a qualified professional who can manage the work safely.



Property Threats and Hazards

from ember attack, radiant heat, direct flame

Flower and vegetable beds

Dry or overgrown beds, bark mulch, timber edging can all ignite and spread a fire

Overhanging Trees / Debris

Debris from branches is combustible and can gather on roofs/gutters.

Sheds / Outbuildings

Sheds, garages can ignite and cause fire to spread.

Moveable Objects

Keep vehicles, wood piles, wheelie bins, trailers clear of a house.

Trees

Trees are fuel for wildfires. Deciduous trees have more fire resistance.

Fences and Walls

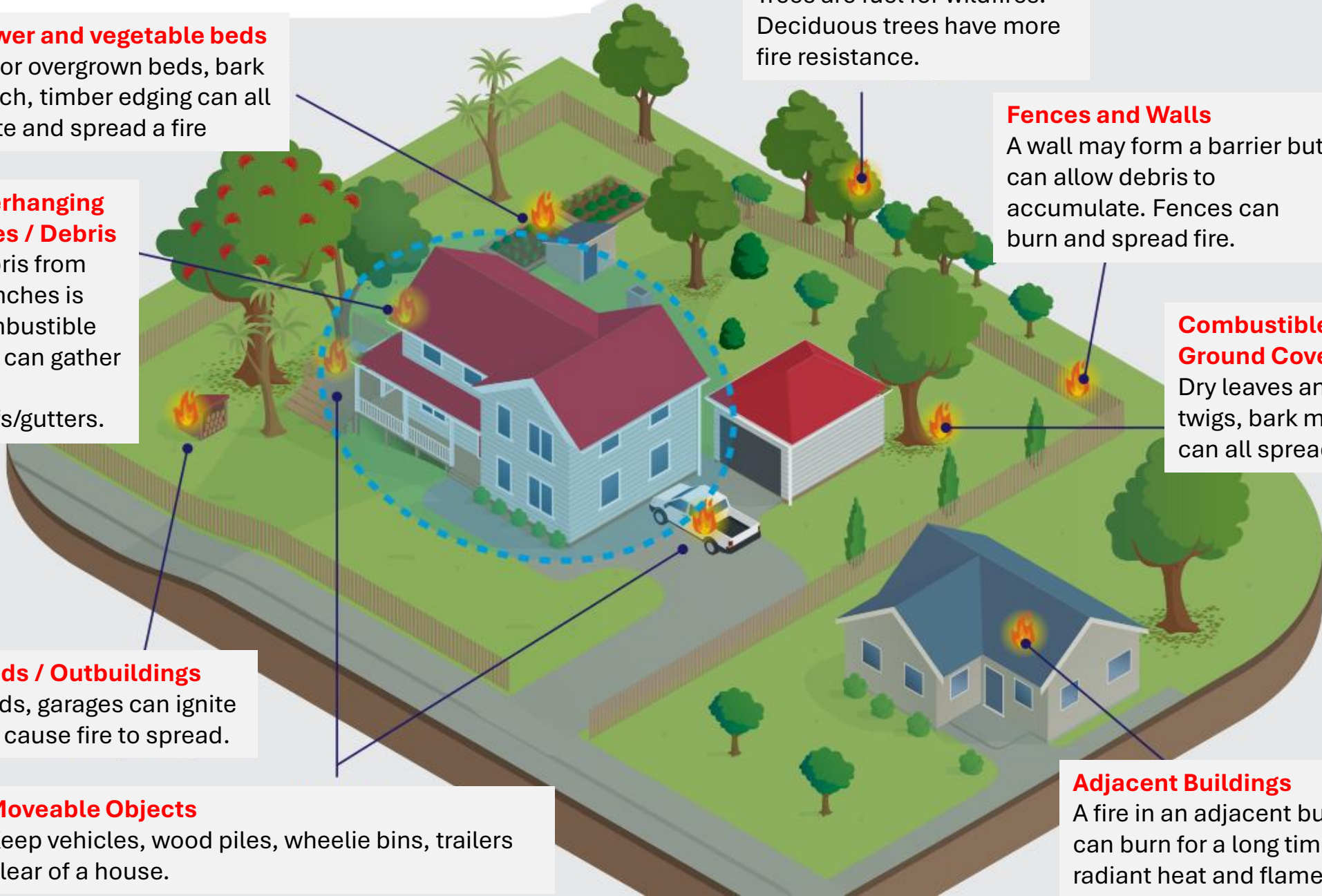
A wall may form a barrier but can allow debris to accumulate. Fences can burn and spread fire.

Combustible Ground Cover

Dry leaves and twigs, bark mulch can all spread fire.

Adjacent Buildings

A fire in an adjacent building can burn for a long time with radiant heat and flame.



Check your Property

- Dispose of stove or fireplace ashes and charcoal briquettes only after soaking them in a metal bucket of water for 24 hours.
- Store gasoline in an approved safety can away from occupied buildings.
- Bulk gas tanks should be far enough away from buildings for valves to be shut off in case of fire. Keep area clear of flammable vegetation.
- Garden hose should be connected to outlet.
- Plan alternative exits from your house.
- Have fire tools handy such as: shovel, rake and bucket for water.



Help firefighters find you fast: Tips for property access

- Make sure your house number or name is clearly visible in case the fire service is called to your address. Know your Eircode to guide emergency services to your property.
- Keep your driveway clear. Ensure gates can be opened quickly.



Disclaimer

- This guide recommends ways to improve how a house performs when it is attacked by wildfire. The success of a house's protection depends largely on how severe the wildfire is and how complete the protection measures contained in this guidance document are applied. But even small measures can still yield significant benefits; almost all fires start small and if the fire is unable to grow, then the house may be saved. Wildfire threat is multifaceted and needs more attention the larger it grows.
- This guidance provides property owners with advice on how to develop more resilient housing in areas at risk from wildfires. The content may exceed what is required in the Building Regulations. The recommendations in this guide do not replace existing Building Regulations, legislation or expert advice on whether and/or how to build a house in areas at risk to wildfire. Property owners must comply with planning permission and Building Regulations.