



# The Forest Fire Warden News

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry

Although I have been Chief of the Division of Forest Fire Protection for a little over one year, I was recently given the honor of also becoming the Chief Forest Fire Warden. While there are some important and humbling responsibilities that accompany that title, there are also a multitude of rewarding opportunities available.

The spring fire season of 2016 will long be remembered for some historic occurrences that challenged our statewide firefighting system to a level not seen in many years, perhaps decades. Notably, this was the first time that we requested significant assistance from our state and federal cooperators outside of our borders. I was impressed with our ability to collectively respond as an organization and to work together across boundaries when needed.

Despite these success, there were also numerous lessons learned; the most important being the fact that the modern world is changing faster than our organization has been able to react to these changes. The fires of 2016 showed us what can happen when a fire occurs in an area already threatened by forest insects, land use and weather patterns, and ultimately arson. We must prepare to meet these challenges as a group by taking a hard look at our organization inside and out.

One of the key steps in dealing with change is to look at problems as an opportunity for positive improvement. We are currently faced with a very real challenge to keep a historic and long-serving organization of Forest Fire Wardens in a position to remain a relevant and contributing factor well into the future. Over the next few years, it is my intent to take significant steps to modernize and standardize the wildland fire program and Forest Fire Warden program within Pennsylvania. Moving forward from here will require the cooperation of us all.

Mike Kern

## Boyscouts

Like much of the state, Tioga County has experienced a hot, dry summer. As a result, the fire danger has been higher than normal. Precipitation from January through July was 5.6" below normal. In July wildfire occurrences began to increase. On July 21 campfire restrictions were put in place on the Tioga State Forest. Campfires were only permitted in designated metal fire rings. Ironically, that same morning a group of Boy Scouts hiking the West Rim Trail called the district office to report an escaped campfire.

The fire was approximately 10' x 10' burning in the ground. The Scout leader explained the scouts attempt to extinguish the fire with the little water on hand. Bear in mind, most of the streams had very little water or were completely dry. They were able to describe the fire location and provide GPS coordinates. Using the coordinates we were able to determine the fire was near Tumbling Run Vista. District employees hiked about ½ mile to the fire location with bladder bags and hand tools. It was clear the Boy Scouts had spent some time stirring the area and creating a scratchline. The fire wasn't large but required a bit of work to extinguish.

This trail is very popular, so it's likely other hikers saw the fire. However, only the Boy Scouts took the time to report it. If it had gone unreported there is no doubt it would have required much more effort to extinguish.

Brian L Plume, Forest Fire Specialist Supervisor  
Tioga State Forest

### *Division of Forest Fire Protection Personnel*

Mike Kern,  
Chief Forest Fire Warden

Matt Reed  
Operations and Planning  
Section Chief

Charles C. Choplick,  
Logistics and Finance  
Section Chief

Brian Pfister,  
Fire Operations Specialist

Jason Williams,  
Aircraft Operations and  
Safety Specialist

Chad Northcraft,  
Air Operations Forester

Levi Gelnett,  
Wildfire Prevention  
Specialist

Todd C. Breininger,  
Fire Operations—Eastern

Joseph R. Miller,  
Fire Operations—Western

Terry Smith,  
Special Investigator

Richard Temple,  
Fire Cache Manager

Diane Schmidt,  
Administrative Assistant

## BSA Troops 256 and 262

This July, BSA Troops 256 and 262 were backpacking along the West Rim Trail. On our second morning, we came across a campsite where someone left a fire smoldering. What started as a campfire in a small fire pit had spread to a smoldering ring about 10 feet across. Several of the logs were quite large, so we estimated that it had been smoldering for a couple days. With some direction from our leaders, we separated the logs used dirt and water to put out as many of the embers as we could. Next, we cleared the surrounding leaves and twigs to make a fire break. Lastly, we called the local park rangers and gave them the GPS coordinates of the site so that they could make sure the area was made safe and put out the rest of the fire. We did not want to take a chance of letting the fire spread further.



Left to right: Brandon Olson, Andy Hartline, Jake Monson, Tyler Scott, Paxton Flandro, Cragun Spencer, Soren Harward, Aldair Tomas, Izaack Flandro, Parker Nelson, James Bleazard, Ron Flandro.

Some may think things like “that campfire is not very big and will just go out on its own.” But that is not a risk that can be taken; we learned that fires need to be taken seriously and not ignored because an unattended campfire can easily become a forest fire.

James Bleazard  
Troop 256 Senior Patrol Leader”

## Wardens in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden has a long history in Pennsylvania, over one hundred years protecting our forests and wild areas from wildland fires. Throughout that time we have endured many changes in the practices and procedures we all follow. Change is often hard to accept, but with that in mind we have to think of all the changes that have occurred. Some of the changes that come to mind are: Fire towers, where did they go? With the appearance of cell phones and aircraft where a person can make a phone call or radio call from anywhere anytime, it shortened the response time and the need for a person to be in a set spot.

Tools have changed in many ways, but rakes, axes, shovels and back pack tanks are still a mainstay. We’ve traded some of our old faithful’s; Cross buck saw for the chainsaw, hand pumps for gasoline pumps, maps for GPS units, and horse drawn wagons for trucks. Incident Management teams were unheard of before the mid 80’s. All these things have made us faster and more efficient, but yet have taken away some of our fond memories of days gone by.

A lot of these changes are dictated to us by outside concerns such as insurance companies, government and attorneys who

want us to be safer, quicker and more efficient at the jobs we do. Others come from people like the National Forest Service and the NWCG (National Wildfire Coordinating Group) and don’t forget NFPA (National Fire Protection Agency). These agencies set the bar for minimum requirements needed to fill hundreds if not thousands of job positions in the wildland fire community, the type of equipment we use and when and how we do it. To sum up, it’s not just our brothers in Forest Fire Protection Harrisburg making these rules and regulations we have to follow, **IT GOES MUCH HIGHER THAN THAT!!!!**

To wrap up this short article, I must define Change;  
Change: Noun / Verb

1. The act or instance of making or becoming different
2. Make or become different

With that being made clear, we can see there is a lot of “change” occurring within the Bureau of Forestry. A large portion of it deals with the training that is now required for anyone on a Wardens Wildland Fire Crew. The PA-130 (Basic Wildland Fire Fighter, 16hrs.) has been replaced and will no longer be available after 1/1/2017. The S-130 (Fire Fighter Training, 32 hrs.) which is a NWCG credited course has been moved into its place. This is going to take a little more effort on the part we play as recruiters, but I do believe it will make our crews safer and more efficient on the fire grounds. The majority of the other changes involve paperwork, most of which is handled by bureau staff and only requires the wardens to answer a few more questions. We have to work with change, and keep in mind it will only take a short period of time before, the change today will be the NORM tomorrow.

Rick Meintel  
Forest Fire Specialist Supervisor  
Gallitzin State Forest

## Fires in the Northeast: “The 16 Mile Fire”



Left fire: 16 Mile Fire; Right fire: Beartown Fire.

April 20<sup>th</sup> 2016 started out like many of the beautiful spring days that preceded it. It was sunny and dry, with a steady breeze. The past winter had provided very little snow cover and the previous month was the 5<sup>th</sup> warmest and driest March on record. The Pocono area was under a red flag warning and the relative humidity ended up dropping to 8%, which is almost unheard of in this region. Just before 10:00 am the Delaware State Forest received a call to respond to two forest

fires that were only about half a mile apart. Within an hour of receiving the call for the first fires, the firefighters were notified of two more fires approximately 3 miles southwest. The two later fires burned together and were called the Beartown fire. Most of the resources were shifted to that fire due to the large number of homes that were threatened. By the end of the first shift, the Beartown fire was estimated to be 300 acres and the 16 Mile fire was 900 acres.

Over the next several days, the firefighters made good progress on the Beartown fire, but they struggled to get containment on the 16 Mile fire. There were many factors that contributed to the rapid advance of the fire. First of all, the relative humidity was dipping down into the single digits, then the fuels were abnormally dry due to the lack of winter and spring precipitation, and in the previous two years there was a significant amount of Gypsy Moth defoliation on the oak trees which caused a high mortality rate with at least 50 snags per acre. The fire would burn up the dead oak trees near the line and spot across up to 500 feet. By the end of the fire activity, it had consumed over 8000 acres as well as 11 cabins and structures.



Lost structure on the 16 Mile Fire

In Pennsylvania, it is not common to have fires this size, the last fire like this was in the early 1990's and it burnt of 10,000 acres in two days. Because of the infrequency of large fires, residents are not as well educated about the risk of wildfires or they don't consider that it could ever happen to them. The Bureau of Forestry has been actively trying to educate the public about the risk of wildfires since its inception in 1915. The Division of Forest Fire Protection has been promoting the Firewise concept since the early 1990's. Being Firewise means that the individual homeowner and community take steps to prepare their homes against wildfires. Some simple steps that you can take are:

- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks. This prevents embers from igniting your home.
- Remove dead vegetation and other items from under your deck or porch, and within 10 feet of the house. Learn more about the basics of defensible space on the Firewise website.
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Remove flammable materials (firewood stacks, propane tanks) within 30 feet of your home's foundation and outbuildings, including garages and sheds. If it can catch fire, don't let it touch your house, deck or porch.

- Wildfire can spread to tree tops. Prune trees so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity. Dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.
- Don't let debris and lawn cuttings linger. Dispose of these items quickly to reduce fuel for fire.
- Inspect shingles or roof tiles. Replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.
- Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.
- Enclose under-eave and soffit vents or screens with metal mesh to prevent ember entry.

### Creating an emergency plan

- Assemble an emergency supply kit and place it in a safe spot. Remember to include important documents, medications and personal identification.
- Develop an emergency evacuation plan and practice it with everyone in your home.
- Plan two ways out of your neighborhood and designate a meeting place.
- Learn more about emergency preparedness planning on NFPA's emergency planning webpage.

### In your community:

- Contact your local planning/zoning office to find out if your home is in a high wildfire risk area, and if there are specific local or county ordinances you should be following.
- If you are part of a homeowner association, work with them to identify regulations that incorporate proven preparedness landscaping, home design and building material use.
- Talk to your local fire department about how to prepare, when to evacuate, and the response you and your neighbors can expect in the event of a wildfire.
- Learn about wildfire risk reduction efforts, including how land management agencies use prescribed fire to manage local landscapes.
- Learn how you can make a positive difference in your community.

### During the time a wildfire is in your area...

- Stay aware of the latest news and updates from your local media and fire department. Get your family, home and pets prepared to evacuate.
- Place your emergency supply kit and other valuables in your vehicle.
- Move patio or deck furniture, cushions, door mats and potted plants in wooden containers either indoors or as far away from the home, shed and garage as possible.
- Close and protect your home's openings, including attic and basement doors and vents, windows, garage doors and pet doors to prevent embers from penetrating your home.

- Connect garden hoses and fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs, or other large containers with water. Firefighters have been known to use the hoses to put out fires on rooftops.
- Leave as early as possible, before you're told to evacuate. Do not linger once evacuation orders have been given. Promptly leaving your home and neighborhood clears roads for firefighters to get equipment in place to fight the fire, and helps ensure residents' safety.

For more tips like this, please visit [Firewise.org](http://Firewise.org).

Although the fires that occurred in the Pocono's this year were devastating, there were some positive outcomes. The picture below shows a house that survived the fire by following the steps above. The fire also opened the public's eyes that houses and communities which are situated in the Wildland Urban Interface are at risk, even in Pennsylvania. This awakening has prompted many homeowners to ask what they can do to lessen the risk to their homes. So please learn from this event that if you live in a forested area that you are at risk of wildfire and take the time to prepare yourself, your home, and your community.



Home Survived By Following The Fire Wise Principals.

Levi Gelnett, Wildfire Prevention Specialist

## Reed Bio

Hello, I'm Matt Reed and I've come to the Division of Forest Fire Protection to fill the vacancy in the Operations and Planning Section left by Mike Kern when he was promoted to Division Chief. I was raised in Lewisburg, Union County, but although the Bald Eagle State Forest is in my backyard and what I call home, I've easily spent just as much time in Weiser and Tiadaghton State Forests. My family hails from Schuylkill County, so I guess I am "Skook" at heart. Our family hunting camp rests in northern Lycoming County and I've run those ridges my entire life. Following high school, I enlisted in the US Navy, and quickly discovered that it was not the life for me. I moved to Arizona for a few years and worked construction, and it was there on the mountains surrounding the Valley of the Sun that I saw my first wildfire. I never would have guessed that less than twenty years later wildfire would be the focus of my career. Eventually, the desert lost its appeal and I returned to Pennsylvania where I continued working in my trade and ultimately running my own small

business. But I wasn't happy. I simply could not continue in the field I'd chosen. After discussing my ideas with my wife, I dissolved the business and enrolled in the Pennsylvania College of Technology, where I graduated with two AAS: Forest Technology and Environmental Management. I immediately continued my education at Penn State with a BS in Forest Science, and the week following graduation I began working as a Forest Technician in Bald Eagle State Forest. There I worked my first wildfire under Terry Smith, became a Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden, and traveled out of state on my first Wildland Fire Crew. After a brief stint in the Bald Eagle, I changed gears and began work as the Recreation Forester in Tiadaghton State Forest. In 2008 I joined the Type 3 Incident Management Teams, where I functioned as Situation Unit Leader and as Public Information Officer. A few years later I began working in State Forest Operations, where I remained until this year. I currently reside in Lewisburg (again) with my wife Ann and daughters Orissa, 9, and Ellis, 8. My girls keep me extremely busy, but in the little free time I get I enjoy trapshooting, trail running, and paddling.

I am extraordinarily excited to move into this new phase in my life and career. Duty, respect, and integrity are qualities exemplified by leaders in wildland fire, and I strive every day to improve myself therein, both for my own credit and for that of the organization. I look forward to working with you all.

Matt Reed, Operations and Planning

---

## Started Twelve Forest Fires

This was a news article in the Wellsboro Gazette from December 13, 1916. It talks about a rash of fires that were started by arson. DCNR has prosecuted many arsonists throughout the years, but arson continues to be one of the leading causes of wildfires in Pennsylvania. We need to continue to educate the public on the danger of wildfires and the importance of reporting people who cause wildfires.

## Hunting Party Had Narrow Escape Near Waterville

Frank Holden was put in jail in Williamsport Saturday, charged with having started twelve incendiary fires on state and private forest lands in the vicinity of Waterville, Lycoming County, Friday. When confronted with a mass of evidence, Holden confessed, R. R. Neefe, state forester of Waterville, announced.

The fires burned over 3,000 acres in various parts of the fine Waterville state forestry reserve and drove several deer-hunting parties out of their camps. One party, composed of Shamokin hunters, headed by Frank Rae, was trapped in camp and narrowly escaped through the burning woods.

The fires, being scattered over the mountain, were difficult to fight. As quickly as the firefighters, who were directed by Neefe and H. H. Morgan, state forester, at Pump Station, extinguished the flames at one place, they were discovered at other points.

Numerous fires left burned patches between Waterville and Lucullus. Deer hunters, forest rangers, and citizens fought the flames nearly all night. Much game was destroyed.

The members of the Shamokin party had an exciting experience. Their camp was in a ravine, and the flames had

nearly surrounded them before they discovered the fire. The flames reached their camp at noon, when all the men were at lunch. Their camp cook was startled when several frightened deer, driven by the flames, fled through the camp. He called the hunters from their mess tent. They quickly tore down their tents and collected articles of clothing and equipment.

The flames were only a short distance from the camp when the hunters found a break in the ring of flames and made their way to safety. Some of them suffered severely as a result of fighting through the dense smoke.

A watcher was stationed on the high lookout tower on the mountainside at Waterville during the day and night. He gave valuable aid in locating the fires as the telltale film of smoke arose at different points. The telephone connecting the tower with rangers' homes on the reserve played an important part in the battle against the flames.

Forester Neefe gathered a force of forty men from the villages along Pine creek when the first fires were discovered. This force was augmented by deer hunters, who have camp sites on state lands. Hunters on the state reserves are compelled to lend their services in time of forest fires.

The fires occurred in an area of ten square miles, over which the foresters scattered their forces. The men were on duty until early Saturday morning. They subdued the flames a short time before rain fell.

During the day, suspicion had pointed to Holden, who had been seen by hunters in the vicinity of places where the fires were discovered. He was placed under arrest by a state policeman, at the instance of Neefe, at his home near Waterville.

Wellsboro Gazette, December 13, 1916.

---

## **Expert: How to Conduct A Wildland Fire Assessment**

**WUI conference speaker gives tips on how firefighters can prepare and conduct home assessments to protect residents' properties from wildland fires and to become a more fire-adapted community**

Preparing for and attacking a wildland fire requires more knowledge than just putting wet stuff on the red stuff. It also requires a different mindset from attacking structure fires.

And it becomes even more complicated when that wildland fire reaches a neighborhood or community in your protection area.

That's where wildland-urban interface expert Ron Roy comes into play.

In his presentation at [International Association of Fire Chief's Wildland-Urban Interface](#) conference in March, Roy will discuss his wildland fire assessment program. The WFAP is a joint effort by the U.S. Forest Service and the [National Volunteer Fire Council](#) to provide volunteer departments with training on how to properly conduct assessments for homes located in the wildland-urban interface.

Roy's seminar, "Wildland Fire Assessment Program," will be held March 7; the [early registration discount](#) is available until Feb. 8.

Roy has been a volunteer firefighter in central Washington since 1973. He's currently the division chief at Douglas County (Wash.) Fire District 2 and the chairman of the wildland committee for NVFC.

He has years of experience fighting wildland and forest fires in the central Washington area.

Firefighters, he says, need to be trained to conduct assessments since the amount of wildfires are steadily increasing each fire season.

### **How to train**

Like any other kind of fire training, a wildland fire assessment course must be done prior to a fire approaching.

As with structural fire home inspections, preparing in advance will allow homeowners to make changes to increase the chances of their home's survival.

"Homeowners are building more and more homes in the wildland-urban interface and the fires are getting bigger and more frequent," Roy said.

During Roy's session, he will break down a four-part train-the-trainer course that can be used to teach the fundamentals of performing home assessments with and for residents living in communities that are susceptible to wildfires.

The four-part course includes understanding the problem, identifying the zones, evaluating the home and looking at available resources.

He'll also provide attendees with a toolkit and supplemental resources after the session.

"We have a printed notebook for the trainers with all of the materials needed to teach, along with a memory stick of the PowerPoint presentation and materials covered," he said.

By providing that critical information, attendees can then go back to their respective departments and teach their colleagues how to conduct a wildland fire assessment. Roy recommends also inviting others in your area to attend, local foresters, city and county leaders and other officials who deal with development in the WUI.

### **In the WUI zone**

How often, or how little, you conduct assessments is dependent on the size of your district and available manpower.

By conducting assessments early, firefighters can help homeowners address structural problems as well as prepare their communities before the next wildfire.

Some departments, according to Roy, aren't doing these important and life-saving assessments at all. That's what he's hoping will change once more information about WFAP is distributed and shared across fire departments who respond to WUI incidents.

"I'm sure there are a handful of departments keeping up with this, but there's not enough," he said.

And once firefighters begin conducting regular assessments and alert a homeowner that they're in a WUI zone, there's an educational process that needs to be followed.

"Many people believe a wildfire won't happen in their backyard," Roy said. "Sad to say, but it takes a large and devastating fire for people to really understand. And even then, not all of them want to make a change."

Roy said that while it may take firefighters a lot of effort to get their community to band together, it will pay off in the end and hopefully help reduce the risk of residents' home being damaged or destroyed.

At the end of session, he's hoping attendees will use the wildland fire assessment program at their department to help raise wildfire awareness, protect homes, neighborhoods and entire communities from future wildfires.

You can learn more about the WFAP [here](#), where you can find customizable documents to help implement and market the assessment program and also an online data tracking system to record how many assessments have been performed and recommendations made to residents.

Sarah Calams

---

## White House Calls for Firefighting Funds After Near-Record Costs

**The U.S. Forest Service's cost for firefighting was an estimated \$1.6 billion in the 2016 budget year**

WASHINGTON — Devastating wildfires like the giant that is still chewing through Big Sur are driving the nation's firefighting costs to unprecedented levels, prompting the Obama administration to say the government is ill-equipped to handle the increasingly busy fire seasons of the historically dry West.

White House Budget Director Shaun Donovan on Tuesday called on Congress to better fund the U.S. Forest Service, the country's biggest wildland firefighting force, which in six of the past 10 years has exhausted its allocation for fire suppression.



Firefighters battle a wildfire on Cajon Boulevard in Keenbrook, Calif., on Wednesday, Aug. 17, 2016. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

The agency has dipped into other programs to make up the shortfall — including programs that aim to prevent wildfires in the first place.

“This is the irony and tragedy of this problem: We are shortchanging the very things that could save money and save lives,” Donovan said in a conference call with reporters, repeating a complaint the White House has made with

growing urgency in recent years. “When you don't do that early work, you have more expensive fires, and more importantly you get more damage to infrastructure, lost lives and lost homes.”

In the 2016 budget year that ended Friday, the Forest Service's cost for firefighting was an estimated \$1.6 billion, officials said, second only to 2015 as the most expensive outlay in U.S. history.

The agency actually reported a small surplus this year in its firefighting fund, but only because Congress approved a one-time \$622 million infusion to help out.

“We are very concerned that we will not have adequate funding for firefighting in the coming year,” Donovan said.

The nation's firefighting costs in the past year were actually higher than \$1.6 billion. The U.S. Forest Service figure does not include smaller but significant costs borne by state and local agencies and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

For years, the White House has been pushing Congress to treat wildfires like other natural calamities and allow the Forest Service to tap a disaster fund when it depletes its firefighting pot. Lawmakers, however, have been unable to reach an agreement with the Obama administration on the terms of any change.

At the same time, fire seasons across the West have grown longer and more severe, a trend tied not only to the recent drought but also to the warming planet. The Forest Service estimates that the season is 78 days longer, on average, than it was in 1970. Complicating matters, more people are living in rugged, forested areas where wildfires burn.

Commanders in charge of responding to big blazes — who face immense pressure to save homes and lives — have responded with more boots on the ground, more trucks and bulldozers digging containment lines, and more water- and retardant-dropping DC-10 jets in the sky, all of which means more money.

The massive Soberanes Fire, which began July 22 along the Big Sur coast and still burns high in the Santa Lucia Mountains, is shaping up to be the most expensive firefighting effort in U.S. history. The blaze, which burned down 57 homes, has cost about \$235 million so far and required the work of thousands of men and women.

The proposal to address the cost of wildfires by making emergency funds available to the Forest Service has prompted concern over where the money will come from — and making sure other natural disasters, like hurricanes and floods, won't lose out. Moreover, some worry that firefighters will be less fiscally responsible with a disaster fund at their disposal.

The Forest Service counters that the current funding arrangement just isn't working amid worsening conditions. Spurred by the five-year drought, forest managers in California have struggled to get resources to deal with a historic tree die-off and accompanying bark beetle infestation.

“We've probably been a bit hampered at trying to mitigate the risk of that and the long-term forest health,” said Jeanne Wade Evans, deputy regional forester for the Pacific Southwest Region.

An estimated 66 million trees have died in the Sierra Nevada over the past five years, and tens of millions more are at risk of dying, a situation that Forest Service officials say is only exacerbating the fire danger.

Scott Stephens, a professor of fire science at UC Berkeley, said more active management of California's wildlands would go a long way toward improving the vitality of forests and mitigating fire risk.

In addition, he noted, the act of suppressing fires that naturally thin forests in remote places where people live can backfire, creating conditions ripe for pests, disease and fire.

"We got to figure out a way to begin the restoration of the forest," Stephens said.

The 2016 fire season around the nation, when measured in acreage, has not been quite as damaging as in past years. About 5 million acres burned during the federal budget year that just ended, officials said, compared with last year's record-setting 10.1 million acres.

Kurtis Alexander  
The San Francisco Chronicle

---

## Be A Firewise Know-It-All



You've heard this from us during previous fire seasons, and you'll continue to hear it from us every fire season: You can never be [Firewise](#) enough. And, with this being [National Preparedness Month](#), you're going to hear it a lot.

The theme this year for National Preparedness Month is "Don't Wait, Communicate. Make your Emergency Plan Today". This straight forward theme makes it very clear that planning is crucial to protect yourself, your loved ones and your property against wildfire.

The [U.S. Forest Service](#) wants us all to hear and understand this message because, simply, it saves lives and property and makes the job of the heroic firefighting crews a lot safer for them so they can come home to their families.

So what is being Fire Wise and what do you need to know?

One of the first steps is [learning where you live](#). What do we mean by this? It's understanding what type of landscaping you have around your property. For instance, are those pines just a little too close to your house? Should you really have a wood shingled roof in the fire-prone area where you live?

Another step in beefing up your Fire Wise knowledge skills is [connecting with neighbors](#) and sharing what you've learned and learning what they know. You might be surprised what fire prevention tips can make all the difference in protecting your home and neighborhood.

And, this year, National Preparedness Month focuses on training youth and helping the elderly in understanding what they can do to be Fire Wise as well.

So often when TV film crews scan a devastated neighborhood after a sudden wildfire overtook it, we see the image of one or two homes that survived. From what I've learned about being Fire Wise, I can pretty much guess that those homeowners had prepared for the very day that this might happen by being Fire Wise.

[Robert Hudson Westover, U.S. Forest Service Office of Communication](#)



# **The Forest Fire Warden News**

P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED