

# Be Wild Fire Ready



## The Emergency Guide to Property Owners in High Wild Fire Inclined Areas

Please read and take action! Keep this booklet handy for  
fire emergencies.

## CONTENTS

Knowing The Fire Risk Profile Of The Western Cape.....	03
What Is A “Fire wise Community”? .....	04
What Does Being A Fire wise Community Involve?.....	05
Understanding Our Fire Risk.....	06
Be Prepared For A Fire Emergency.....	07
Assessing Your Personal Fire Risk .....	08
Maintain A Fire wise Garden .....	10
Stay Informed.....	13
Do You Stay Or Evacuate? .....	14
Prepare Your Home From Wildfire Risk.....	15
Fire Rules For A “Fire wise Community”.....	16

## Knowing The Fire Risk Profile Of The Western Cape

The Western Cape is exposed to a broad range of natural and human instigated hazards. It is regarded as one of the most disaster inclined provinces in South Africa.

### THE AREAS RECENTLY AFFECTED BY HIGH RISK FIRES IN THE WESTERN CAPE

DATE	AREA	IMPACT
June 2017	Knysna	A wild fire destroyed 973 homes with more than 2000 people displaced.
November 2017	George	The wild fire was approximately four times the size of the Knysna fire.
30 December 2018	Wupperthal	A wild fire destroyed an estimated 45 homes and left 200 people displaced.
11 January 2019	Overstrand Local Municipality	Three fires were faced, simultaneously on the same day.

The impact of these hazards increases as human settlements continue to expand in ecologically fragile regions inland or coastal. Highly vulnerable communities are already highlighted in significant seasonal losses triggered by fire events, strong winds and heavy rainfall.

The Western Cape Disaster and Fire Directorate would like to acknowledge and thank the Pringle Bay community for allowing us to support this Fire Awareness and Fire wise initiative for communities living in high fire risk areas.

# What is a “Fire wise Community”?

## Why Must We Participate?

In 1998, America lost 1400 homes to fires. They formulated a system that South Africa’s “Working on Fire” has studied and adopted to this country.

It involves the realization that reducing the risk of fire is **EVERYONE’S** responsibility, including town planners, architects, developers, builders, official and voluntary fire fighters and every property owner!

### FIRST FIRE WISE COMMUNITIES SELECTED IN SOUTH AFRICA

- Pringle Bay
- Betty’s Bay
- Rooi Els



# What Does Being a Fire wise Community Involve?

<b>Fire wise Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community Stakeholders</li> <li>● Cape Nature Representatives</li> <li>● Fire Brigade Representatives</li> </ul>
<b>Conduct A Risk Assessment</b>	<p><b>RATING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under 30 - (Low)</li> <li>● 40 - 60 - (High)</li> <li>● Over 60 - (Extreme Risk)</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Drawn up to reduce fire risk</li> <li>● To increase community’s ability to prevent and limit fire damage.</li> <li>● This includes property owners assessing their own fire risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Progress</b>	Monitored annually



# Step 1

## Understanding Our Fire Risk

### THE COMBINATION OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FIRE RISK



#### FYNBOS

Burns readily due to its fine and fibrous nature.



#### ESKOM

Collapsed power lines, due to our gale-force winds.



#### ALIEN VEGETATION

Rooikrans, gum trees and wattle catch fire rapidly.



#### STRONG WINDS

Despite the risk, people still braai and a spark could be fanned into a fire.



#### HIGH-TRAFFIC ROAD SKIRTING

Cigarettes butts carelessly disposed.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The Western Cape is an extreme fire risk region and due to global warming that risk is increasing.
- Due to global warming there is an increase in wind strength, heavy rain storms and lightning.
- With every 1 degree increase in global temperature there is a 29% increase in fire risk.

# Step 2

## Be Prepared For A Fire Emergency

### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

When a two-kilometre-wide wall of fire approaches your residential area. Breathing becomes hard in the dense smoke and burning cinders blow into your property by the gale-force South-Easter wind. Suddenly, surrounding bushes are fanning into flames. There are no fire-fighters in sight and you have no idea what to do?

### HOW TO PREPARE FOR A WILD FIRE APPROACHING YOUR PROPERTY?

It is vital to have a plan of action in place in order to be prepared in case of a wild fire. Make sure that your possessions/assets are properly insured. However, the best insurer cannot replace computer data files, personal documents, family photos, souvenirs and artwork. How much time will it take to rebuild your life?

We need to do everything we can to reduce the risk of a fire starting and gain those precious 'extra minutes' that will help give firefighters a better chance to get the fire under control. Reducing the fire hazards can make it safer for you to stay and defend your home.

### TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS BY REMOVING:



All dead vegetation from your property and verge.



All fast burning alien vegetation - rooikrans, pampas grass, port jackson, black wattle or gum trees from your property and verge.



Any bushes close to windows, glass doors, wood decks or beams etc.

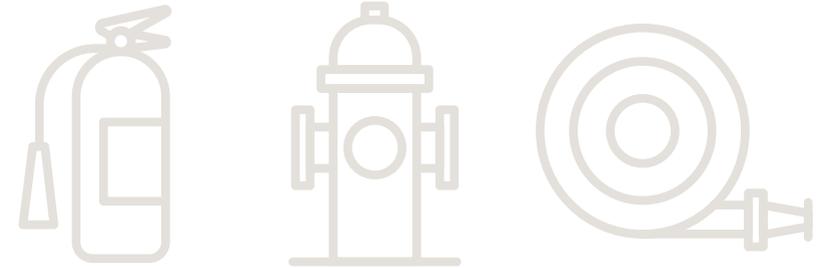
### WHAT MAKES A FIRE WISE GARDEN BENEFICIAL?

A well-maintained garden will reduce the fire intensity and help slow down the fire's progress. New gardens can be laid out as Fire Wise gardens. If yours is an established or natural fynbos garden then you should work towards achieving a Fire Wise garden every single year.

# Step 3

## Assessing Your Personal Fire Risk

**PLEASE ASSESS YOUR PERSONAL PROPERTY FIRE RISK BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING YES / NO QUESTIONS:**



*1. Is your property situated on a slope or subject to strong South-Easter winds?*

If YES, beware that fire naturally moves up a slope and is more intense higher up or in wind.

*2. Is your property close to a large, open and natural area?*

If YES, create a fire break on your property, next to the fire risk area. However, it won't stop the fire but provide fire fighters with better access.

*3. Do you regularly remove all alien vegetation, dead wood and combustible material from your property?*

If NO, then regularly remove all alien vegetation, dead wood and organic matter on your property.

*4. Is your LP gas cylinders housed legally?*

If NO, get advice from an LP gas stockist and revise your storage area accordingly.

*5. Is your house wood-framed or thatched?*

If YES, keep vegetation less than 20cm high around it.

*6. Is your firewood and compost heap stored far away from your property?*

If NO, create a 3m "clear zone" around your house. (See next page)

*7. Is your hosepipe accessible and does it reach right around your house?*

If NO, get an extra tap or hosepipe. A rainwater storage tank and pump would be ideal.

*8. Do you have any external electrical wiring hanging above trees or bushes?*

If YES, please remove or cover in metal conduit.

*9. Are fire hydrants easily accessible for fire-fighters?*

If NO, please advise your Fire Wise Committee or Fire Chief.

*10. Can a fire engine easily access your property right around?*

If NO, clear and open your driveway for more access.

*11. Do you/your neighbours ever burn garden waste?*

If YES, any burning is illegal (unless with a permit).

*12. Are all wooden decks or fences treated with fire-retardant?*

If NO, visit a hardware store or speak to a paint specialist about fire-retardant treatment.

*13. Are your roof trusses exposed under your eaves?*

If YES, box in exposed roof beams with non-flammable material.

*14. Do you/your neighbours ever braai without a hosepipe at hand and ready to use?*

If NO, always have a hosepipe ready, as fire risk is very high in summer.

*15. If someone is running a fire risk, do you advise them how to be firewise?*

If NO, please notify your Fire Wise Committee if they do not comply!

**PLEASE REDO THIS ASSESSMENT EVERY YEAR.**

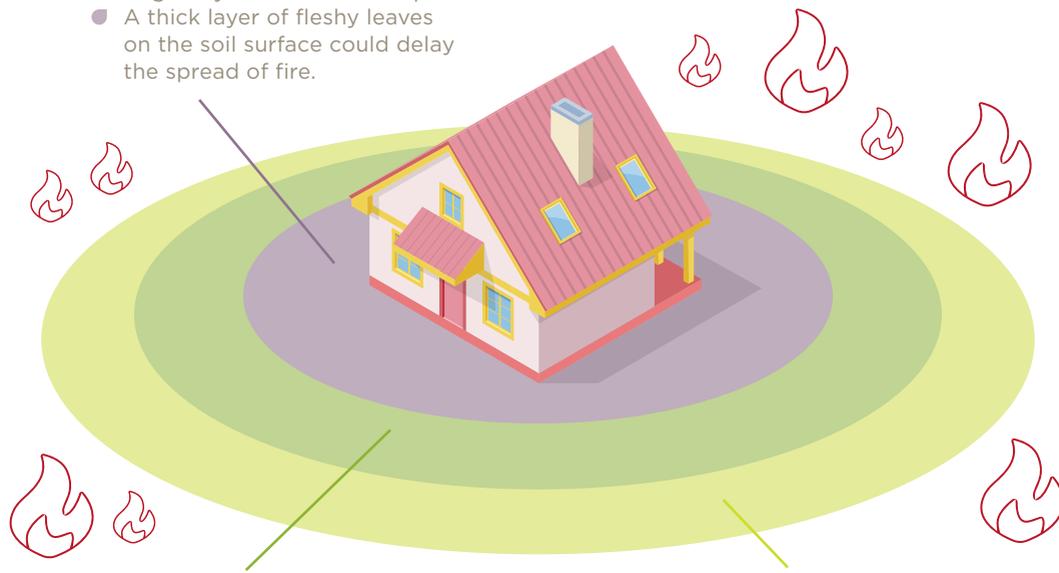
## Step 4

# Maintain a Fire wise Garden

A well-maintained garden will reduce a fire's intensity and help slow down its progress. SANBI recommends that new gardens are laid out in three Fire Wise 'zones'. Established gardens or natural fynbos gardens should work towards achieving these Fire Wise "zones" every single year.

### FIRE WISE/CLEAR ZONE

- No large shrubs
- No climbers or trellises on the walls
- Use low growing plants and ground-covers scattered with gravel or lawn
- Fynbos should be trimmed to 20cm high
- Regularly remove all dead plant material
- A thick layer of fleshy leaves on the soil surface could delay the spread of fire.



### MEDIUM RESISTANT MIDDLE ZONE

- Mix tall and short fynbos shrubs to reduce fire heat

### HIGHLY RESISTANT OUTER 'BUFFER' ZONE

- Low growing plants with high resistance to fire

## Fire wise/Clear Zone

RECOMMENDED PLANT TYPES		
GROUNDCOVERS	SMALL SHRUBS	SUCCULENT LEAVES
Gazania pectinate	Agathosma ciliaris	Cotyledon orbiculate - Pig's Ear
Gazania krebsiana - Red Gazania	Coleonema album	Crassula coccinea - Red Crassula
Arctotis angustifolia - Sandveld	Phyllice ericoides	Crassula fascicularis - Klipblom
Arctotis stoechadifolia - Silver	Gnidia squarrosa	
Helichrysum retortum	Stilbe ericoides	
Cliffortia ferruginea - Glastee	Ericas	
Carpobrotus edulis - Sour Fig		
Carpobrotus acinaciformis - Sour Fig		
Lampranthus furvus - Vygie		
Lampranthus bicolor - Vygie		



## Medium Resistant Middle Zone

RECOMMENDED PLANT TYPES	
SPROUTERS	RESISTANT TREES
Leucadendron salignum	Brabejum stellaifolium – Wild Olive
Protea cynaroides – King protea	Cunobia capensis – Rooiels
Mimetes cucullatus – Rooi stompie	Ilex mitis – African Holly
Rhus lucida – Blinkblaar Taaibos	Halleria lucida – Tree Fuschia
Pelargonium cucullatum – Wild Malva	Canthium mundianum – Rock Alder
Maytenus oleoides – Klipkershout	
Brachylaena discolor – Kusvaalbos	
Olea europea subsp Africana – Wild Olive	
Chondropetalum tectorum – Dekriet	

## Highly Resistant Outer ‘Buffer’ Zone

RECOMMENDED PLANT TYPES		
GROUNDCOVERS	BULBS	GOOD HEDGE TREES
Carpobrotus edulis – Sour Fig	Haemanthus coccineus – April Fool	Rhus crenata – Dune Crowberry
Carpobrotus acinaciformis – Sour Fig	Brunsvigia orientalis – Kings Candelabra	Rhus glauca – Blou Koeniebos
Lampranthus furvus – Vygie		Thus lucida – Blinkblaar Taaibos
Lampranthus bicolor – Vygie		Tarchonanthus camphoratus – Campher Bush
		Chrysanthemoides monolifera – Bietou

## Stay Informed

The Fire Danger Index or Rating predicts the fire behaviour should a fire start and how dangerous it would be attempting to extinguish the fire. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions. On Orange and Red days, NO FIRES should be lit.



### INSIGNIFICANT

- Expect cool conditions and high humidity.
- Fire danger is low and fire is not likely to ignite.
- No precautions are needed.

### LOW

- Expect cool and low to moderate conditions.
- Fires are likely to ignite but spread slowly.
- Prescribed burns may be allowed on the condition that reasonable precautions against fire spreading are taken and burn permits have been obtained.

### MODERATE

- Expect warm, dry and possibly windy conditions.
- Fires ignite readily, spread easily and most likely to be controlled in these conditions.
- No fires are allowed in the open air, except those that are authorised by Chief Executive Officer and those in designated fireplaces.

### HIGH

- Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions.
- Fires ignite readily and spread very rapidly.
- Spot fires may occur.

### EXTREME

- Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions.
- Spot fires will occur, move quickly and come from many directions.
- No fires are allowed under any circumstances, in the open air.
- Be on high alert if a wildfire occurs.
- Review your emergency fire plan measures.
- Early evacuation in the case of a wildfire impacting your home is advised.

# Do You Stay or Evacuate?

Once you have assessed the fire risk and taken the physical steps to reduce the hazard, you must plan for a fire emergency. Decide whether to stay and defend your property or evacuate? If you decide to evacuate, do so well before the fire approaches the area. A home is more likely to be saved if there are able-bodied people to quickly extinguish small fires on or near the house during a wild fire. But you need the proper equipment and you must be mentally and physically prepared to fight fire.

## IF YOU DECIDE TO STAY, YOU WILL NEED THIS EQUIPMENT



A hose sprinkler system to keep the area soaked. Take note, to wait until fire is close by, as radiant heat accelerates evaporation.



Fill a bath and buckets as water pressure will drop dramatically due to other firefighting efforts.



Keep fire extinguisher/s in the house and bring garden hose into the house as it could be destroyed by the fire. **DO NOT** spray water onto windows as they may crack or shatter.



Only leave your home once the fire has passed before you deal with spot fires in the yard. Check for trees, electrical or telephone poles that may still be burning. **Avoid any water coming into contact with electrical wiring.**



Close all exterior openings and check interior for stray embers. **Remove curtains** from window openings as they will easily catch alight if window glass shatters in the heat.

However, if you decide to evacuate then ensure that you do not hamper the fire fighters or fire engines while making your exit. Assemble at your designated evacuation area.

# Prepare Your Home From Wildfire Risk

A well-prepared house can survive a wildfire. It is vital to be prepared before the wildfire season starts. The proximity of vegetation surrounding your home is just as critical as preparing your home from wildfire risk.

## FACTORS TO CONSIDER WITH REGARDS TO YOUR HOUSE

- The material from which your house is made and its design.
- The modifications done to your house can improve its likelihood to survive a wildfire.
- The number of modifications will depend on the type of house you own.
- Decks, windows, doors and roof areas have the greatest risk.

## PRIMARY CAUSES OF HOMES AND STRUCTURES CATCHING FIRE IN WILDFIRES

Burning embers are the primary cause of homes and structures catching fire. This is a constant threat with an active wildfire nearby. As a burning ember can be carried by the wind and land on or around your property. They can fall before, during and after a wildfire passes. An ember can be burning twigs, leaves and organic litter in your gutters.

## HOW TO IMPROVE THE FIRE-RESISTANCE OF A ROOF?



**Clear roof and gutters** from leaves or organic matter.



**Cover external skylights** with non-combustible fire screens.



**Treat roof** with reflective non-combustible sheeting to prevent embers from entering the roof.



A professionally installed **sprinkler system** can help fight embers.



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