



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE IN UPPER DESCHUTES RIVER COMMUNITIES

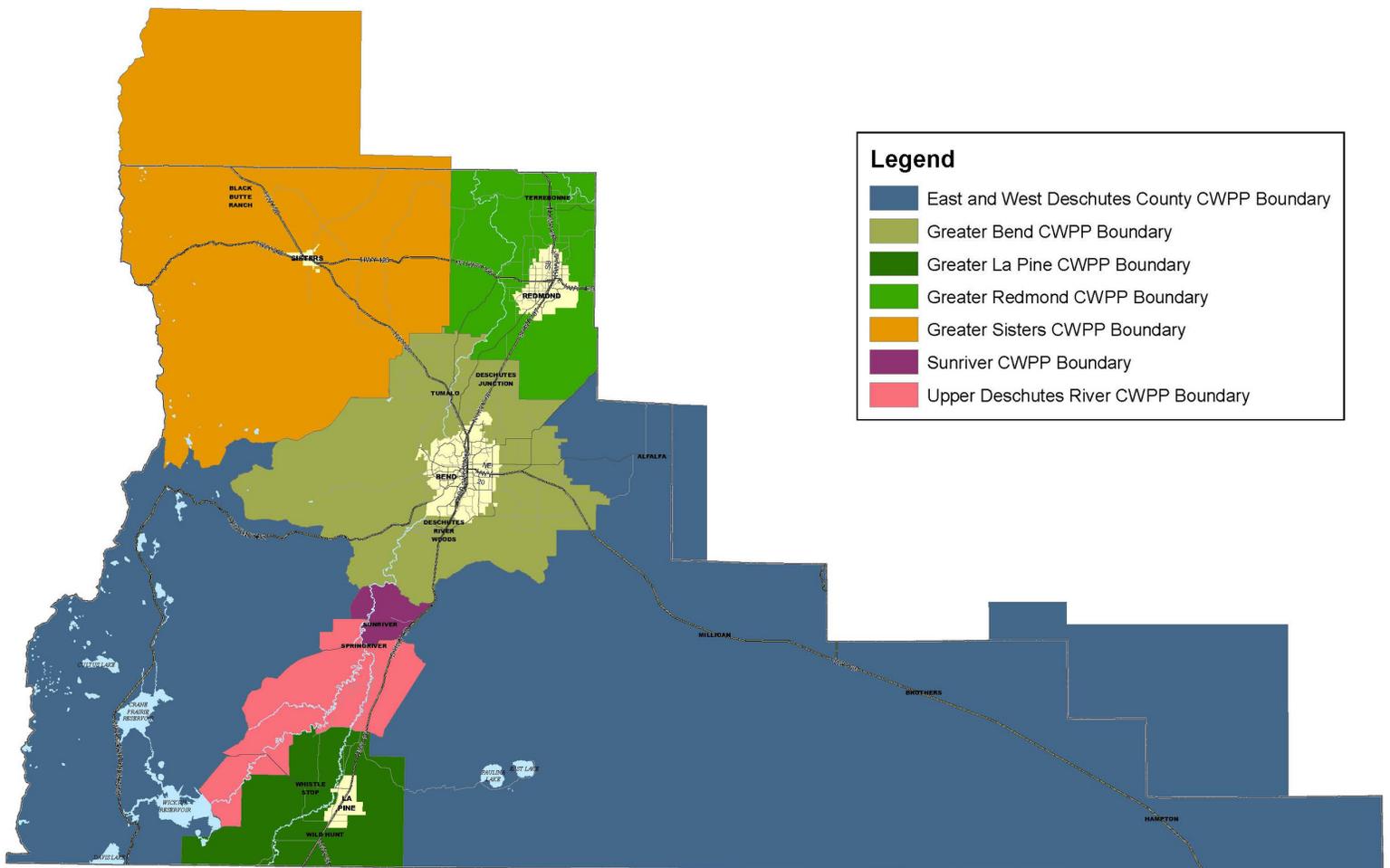
# WILDFIRE IN DESCHUTES COUNTY

Historically, Deschutes County's diverse ecosystems including ponderosa & lodgepole pine, western juniper, mixed conifer stands, brush and grasslands, were maintained by frequent fires. Today, with more development into the wildland urban interface, or WUI, and effective wildland fire suppression, the landscape is patterned by stands of dense trees, brush, and grasses. These conditions lead to fire behavior that produces flame lengths over eight feet with crowning and torching that can result in stand replacing high severity fires.

Deschutes County has experienced many large fires and the landscape has a long history with wildfire. Two of the most notable fires that caused structure loss occurred in the 1990's. Combined, the Awbrey Hall and Skeleton fires charred over 20,000 acres and destroyed 52 homes. Each year in Deschutes County fire resources respond to hundreds of small brush fires, as well as many that are larger, that threaten the lives and property of residents throughout the County.

Beginning in the early 2000's, Deschutes County and Project Wildfire partnered with local communities to develop seven distinct, tailored Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). The plans were collaboratively designed by community members, elected officials, local government representatives, fire resources from local, state and federal agencies, and other interested individuals. Project Wildfire acts as the caretaker of the seven Deschutes County Community Wildfire Protection Plans and facilitates the collaborative revision of each plan on a 5-year cycle.

## DESCHUTES COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN BOUNDARIES



# WHAT IS A CWPP?

**Fire cannot be excluded from fire-adapted forests**



Wildfire threatens people and homes across the U.S. When homes are built in and around forests, they become part of the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

Much of the WUI occurs in fire-adapted ecosystems, which requires fire to be healthy. For much of the 20th century, an aggressive and successful effort suppressed most wildfires. However, fire cannot be excluded from fire-adapted ecosystems forever. Now dense, unhealthy landscapes have created a hazard for people living in the WUI,

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a strategic plan typically developed by the local fire department, federal and state land managers, local governments, and communities.

A CWPP is developed to guide wildfire mitigation at all scales and land ownership.

Each CWPP is designed for and by a specific community's needs which drive decisions and designations about scale, approach, an area of emphasis, and depth.

CWPP's are designed to mitigate and prepare for wildfire risk and recommend actions including fuels treatments, road improvements, evacuation planning, and prescribed fire to reduce risks.

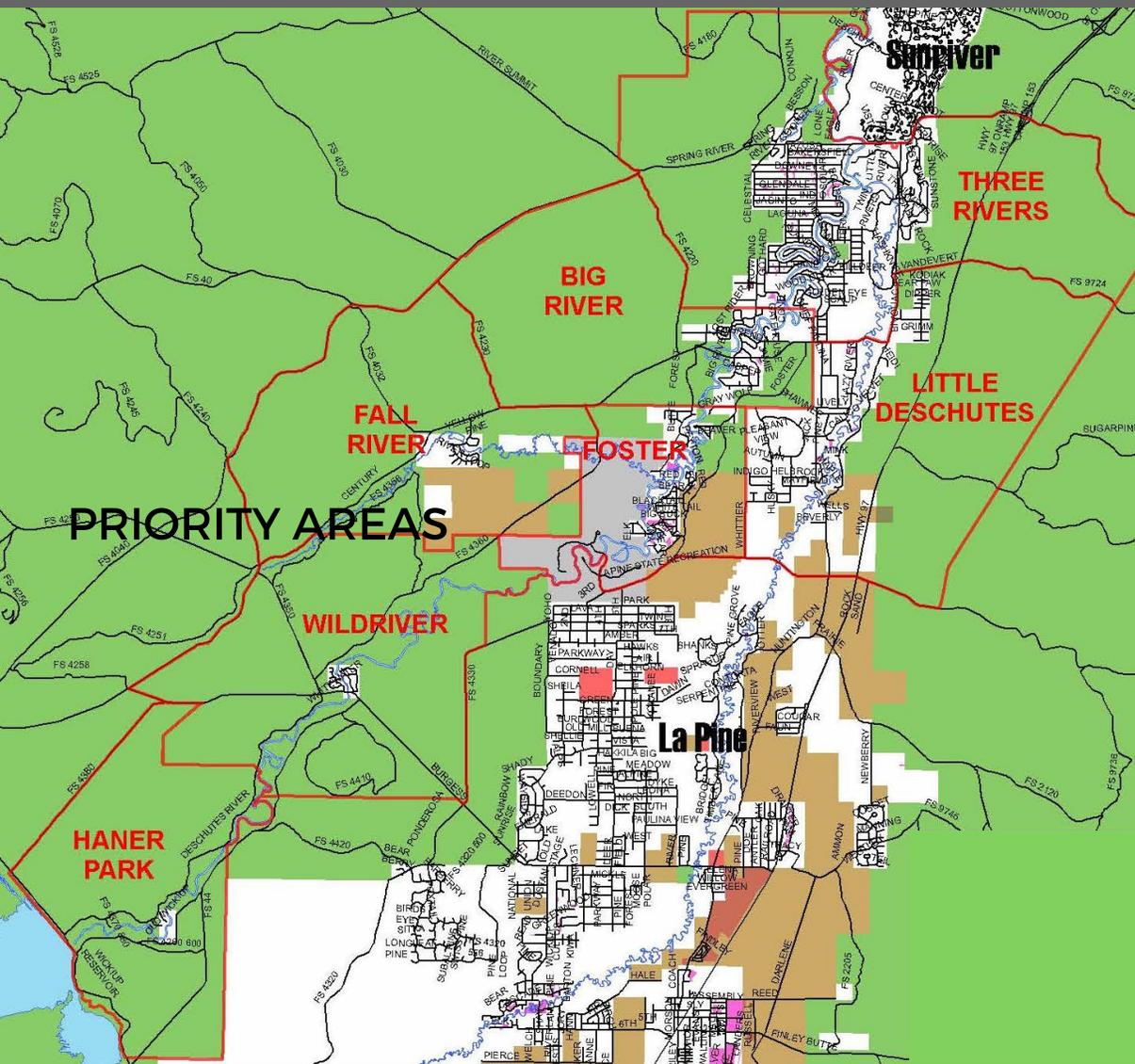
CWPP's are important in facilitating community engagement in wildfire risk reduction and preparedness and are used to set a broad array of priorities.

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**A CWPP is a collaborative plan used to guide wildfire mitigation and facilitate fire adapted communities.**

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# DO YOU KNOW YOUR RISK?



Each area within the Upper Deschutes River Community Wildfire Protection Plan had its wildfire risk rated by a suite of factors. Some of those factors include, but are not limited to:

- Number of homes (density)
- How often fires occur (fire occurrence)
- Weather
- Fire Response
- Community Preparedness
- Amount of vegetation (Fire Fuels)
- Infrastructure present (schools, churches, main roadways, etc.)

After the total score for the risk assessment was considered, the following are the priority areas:

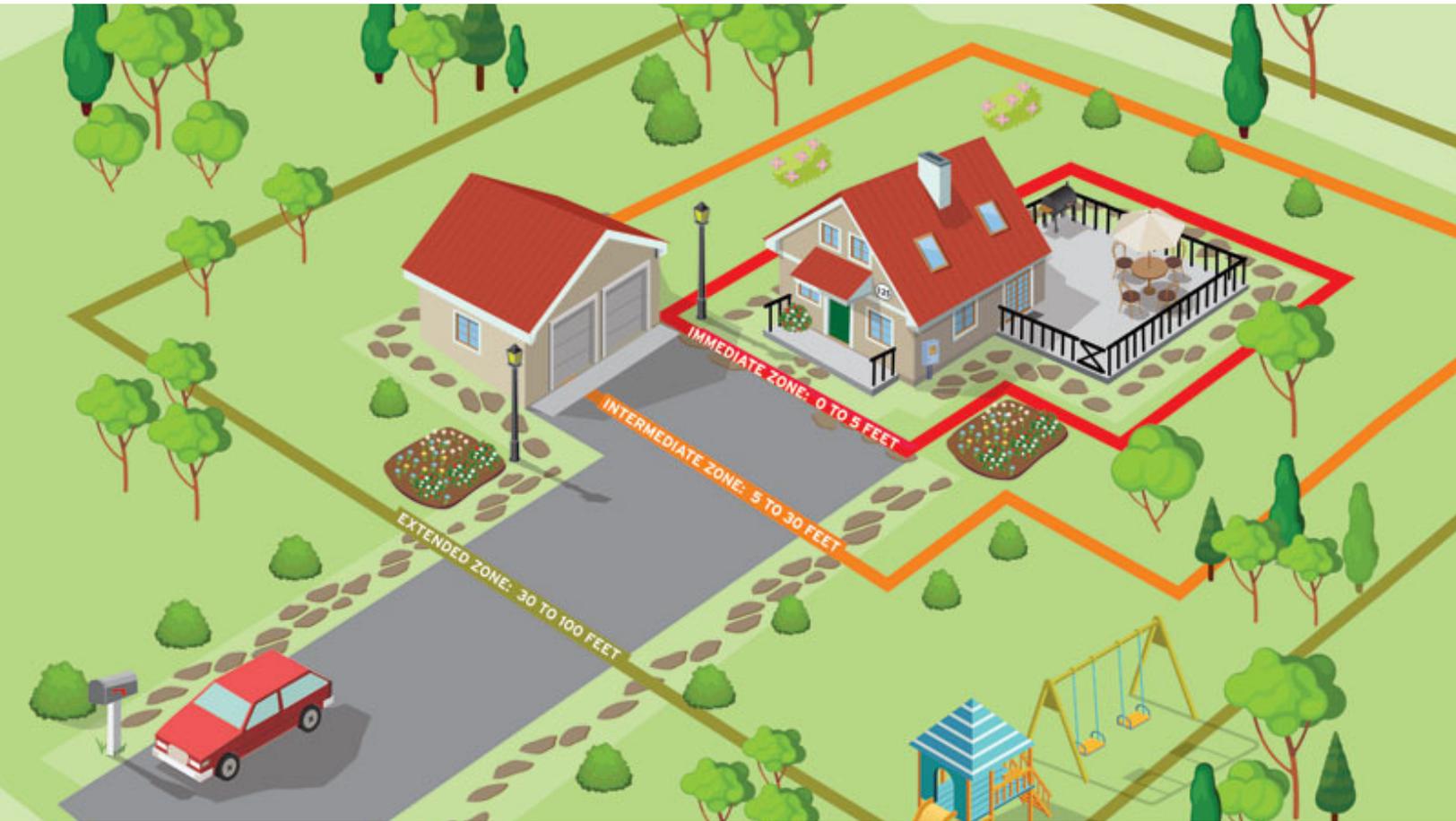
- Little Deschutes
- Foster
- Three Rivers
- Haner Park
- Big River
- Fall River
- Wild River

Every area in Deschutes County accepts some level of wildfire risk; the Upper Deschutes River is no exception. Residents in the Upper Deschutes River landscape should be preparing for fire season well in advance with defensible space, evacuation kits and routes.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan acts as a vehicle to not only promote work on public lands but to educate and empower private landowners to take preparedness steps well ahead of fire season. Within the document, there are recommendations to reduce structural ignitability, create defensible space, and evacuation preparedness information.

If you live in one of the highest risk areas or you'd like to take steps to mitigate your wildfire risk, this guide can provide some of the first steps to wildfire preparedness. The information contained in this guide offers specific recommendations to residents regarding evacuation routes and defensible space activities.

# DEFENSIBLE SPACE



Wildfire threatens people and homes across the U.S. When homes are built in and around forests, they become part of the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

Research around home destruction vs. home survival in wildfires point to embers and small flames as the main way that the majority of homes ignite in wildfires. Embers are burning pieces of airborne wood and/or vegetation that can be carried more than a mile through the wind can cause spot fires and ignite homes, debris, and other objects.

Experiments, models and post-fire studies have shown homes ignite due to the condition of the home and everything around it, up to 200' from the foundation. By taking care of the 200' around your home, you are putting in what's called defensible space.

Your defensible space can be broken into three (3) main zones: the Immediate, Intermediate, and Extended zone.

## Immediate zone

The home and the area 0-5' from the furthest attached exterior point of the home; defined as a non-combustible area. Science tells us this is the most important zone to take immediate action on as it is the most vulnerable to embers. START WITH THE HOUSE ITSELF then move into the landscaping section of the Immediate Zone.

## Intermediate zone

5-30' from the furthest exterior point of the home. Landscaping/hardscaping-employing careful landscaping or creating breaks that can help influence and decrease fire behavior

## Extended zone

30-100 feet, out to 200 feet. Landscaping – the goal here is not to eliminate fire but to interrupt fire's path and keep flames smaller and on the ground.

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**Correct defensible space can give your home a 85% chance of survival during a wildfire situation.**

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# DEFENSIBLE SPACE

## Immediate zone

- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
- Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- Clean debris from exterior vents & reduce embers that could pass through vents in the eaves by installing 1/8 inch metal mesh screening.
- Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows. Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors – mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles – anything that can burn. Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.

## Intermediate zone

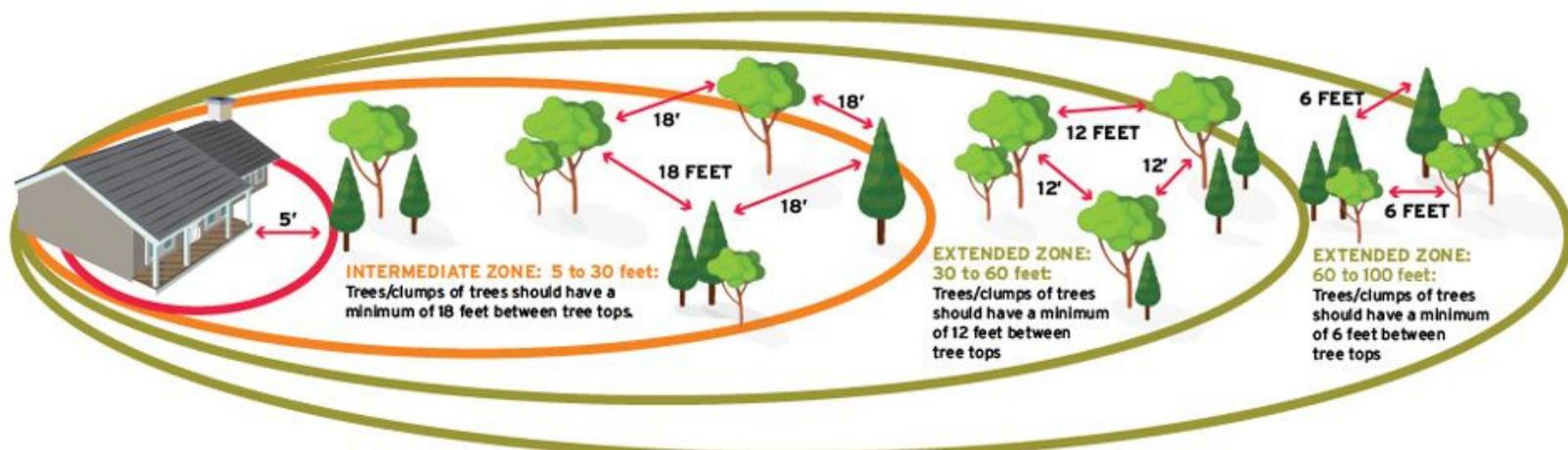
- Clear vegetation from under large stationary propane tanks.
- Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways/paths, patios, and decks.
- Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of four inches.
- Remove ladder fuels (vegetation under trees) so a surface fire cannot reach the crowns. Prune trees up to six to ten feet from the ground; for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.
- Space trees to have a minimum of eighteen feet between crowns with the distance increasing with the percentage of slope.
- Tree placement should be planned to ensure the mature canopy is no closer than ten feet to the edge of the structure.
- Tree and shrubs in this zone should be limited to small clusters of a few each to break up the continuity of the vegetation across the landscape.

## Extended zone

- Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.
- Remove dead plant and tree material.
- Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.
- Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.
- Trees 30 to 60 feet from the home should have at least 12 feet between canopy tops.
- Trees 60 to 100 feet from the home should have at least 6 feet between the canopy tops.

Ensure your roof is made of non-flammable materials; asphalt shingles, metal or tile.

## TREE SPACING



# EVACUATION

Central Oregon is no stranger to wildfire. The need to prepare yourself & your family for evacuation is critical. One of the most important items residents can do is register their cell phones to receive emergency alerts from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office. If the emergency responders can reach the residents, they can't provide updates on local emergencies. To sign up, search for Everbridge Deschutes County and follow the steps, this should not take more than a few moments. Local law enforcement officials follow the same evacuation protocols. Residents should be aware of the evacuation levels and their implications. For more information on how to prepare you and your family visit [projectwildfire.org/evacuation](http://projectwildfire.org/evacuation).

## Level 1: Be Ready

There is an incident in your area and residents should be aware of potential evacuation. Be aware of the danger, monitor emergency services sources and local media for information. Those persons who will need additional time to exit an area or have health conditions (especially respiratory conditions that could be made worse by smoke) should consider leaving. You are encouraged to prepare or even move livestock and pets out of the area.

## Level 2: Get Set

There is significant danger in your area and residents should be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. You are encouraged to leave and should do so as soon as possible. If you choose to stay, you should be able to leave immediately if conditions worsen. Entry to evacuated areas may be denied until the hazard subsides. This may be the only notice you receive. Emergency services cannot guarantee we will be able to notify you if conditions rapidly deteriorate.

## Level 3: Go Now!

There is immediate and imminent danger and you should evacuate immediately. **DO NOT DELAY LEAVING** to gather any belongings or make efforts to protect your home. Leave immediately and as quickly as possible. Drive carefully, turn on your headlights, and follow any directions from emergency services personnel. Entry to evacuated areas will be denied until the hazard subsides.





# LEARN MORE & STAY INFORMED

## Resources:

Upper Deschutes River Community  
Wildfire Protection Plan

[www.projectwildfire.org/cwpps](http://www.projectwildfire.org/cwpps)

FireFree [www.firefree.org](http://www.firefree.org)

La Pine Fire District [lapinefire.org](http://lapinefire.org)

Oregon Department of Forestry [odfcentraloregon.blogspot.com](http://odfcentraloregon.blogspot.com)

Firewise USA [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)



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Project Wildfire is a Deschutes County community organization that facilitates, educates, disseminates, and maximizes community efforts toward effective fire planning. Project Wildfire's mission is to prevent deaths, injuries, property loss, and environmental damage due to wildfires in Deschutes County. We achieve this by building partnerships, sharing resources, and eliminating redundancies. Typically Project Wildfire succeeds where individuals and solo agencies do not. Many of our goals are achieved by developing long-term wildfire prevention and education strategies designed to reach an ever-changing community.

This summary is based on a larger report entitled, Upper Deschutes River Community Wildfire Protection Plan available at [www.projectwildfire.org/cwpps](http://www.projectwildfire.org/cwpps). For up to date fire information visit [www.centraloregonfire.org](http://www.centraloregonfire.org).

