

Wildfire Risk Increasing, Fire Department Can Help You Prepare

Residents of Horseshoe Bay may have heard that Texas Governor Greg Abbott directed the Texas Division of Emergency Management to activate additional state emergency response resources on Friday, October 17 in anticipation of growing wildfire danger.

The Texas A&M Forest Service has said that dry vegetation, along with increased winds, and hot temperatures have created an expanded wildfire potential. The service recently raised the Wildland Fire Preparedness Level to level 3, out of 5.

Level 3 means wildfire activity is impacting several regions of the state as the result of drought, dry vegetation or frequent fire weather events. The Texas A&M Forest Service strategically positions personnel, equipment and aircraft in areas at risk. Additional resources, including those from other regions, agencies or states, may be necessary.

With the recent above normal temperatures, fuels—such as grass and other vegetation—become drier and can ignite more easily.

In the Hill Country, fire crews in Burnet County battled a grass fire in the 1500 block of Williams Road on October 15 that grew to 321 acres. While no homes were threatened because of this incident, it doesn't take much for embers to travel and ignite nearby structures, especially when winds are high.

Horseshoe Bay is within a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), an area where wildland vegetation meets or intermingles with development, including homes and businesses. This zone is susceptible to wildfires due to the increased risk of ignition from both natural and human-caused sources, as well as the potential for fires to spread from wildland to human structures and vice versa.

Forest Service research has determined that 80% of all structures lost by wildfire are lost due to embers. Fire embers can travel over a mile away from the head of a wind-driven wildfire! This puts homes located within the WUI at risk.

How the Horseshoe Bay Fire Department Can Help

The Horseshoe Bay Fire Department readies itself for the dangers of wildland fires, but did you know that YOU can assist us in providing for the safety of your home? With the creation of this program, the Fire Department offers a professional viewpoint on the dangers of wildfire that lurk on your property.

There are methods for homeowners to prepare their homes to withstand ember attacks, which are the primary ignition source to homes during a wildland fire. The good news is that there are ways to minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any

attachments. Experiments, models and post-fire studies have shown homes ignite due to the condition of the home and everything around it, up to 200 feet from the foundation. This is called the Home Ignition Zone.

The Horseshoe Bay Fire Department will, upon appointment, come perform a Residential Wildland Readiness Survey free of charge to any citizen of Horseshoe Bay or our neighboring, serviced communities of Oak Ridge, Blue Lake, or Deerhaven.

During this exterior property evaluation, the Fire Department will point out areas that may need to be addressed to help you better prepare your home and property should a wildland fire occur. Please call 830-598-6953 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Additionally, you can read the Fire Department's article series about Wildfire Preparedness —Part 1: How to Protect Your Home, Part 2: Defensible Space and Firewise Landscaping, and Part 3: Knowing When Danger is Imminent—by visiting www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/wildfire.

You can learn more about active wildfires in Texas by visiting the Wildfire Activity Map at www.tfswildfires.com/public.