

Ask an Expert – Wildfire Preparedness: What Every Utahn Should Know

J. Bradley Washa

08/07/2026

```
$(document).ready(function(){ $(''.pdf-wrapper').hide();
$(''.pageTitle').addClass('text-bold'); });
```



PHOTO

ATTACHED, by Ernesto Lopez

View of the Canyon Road fire from Sumac Drive in Logan. Utah entered the 2026 fire season with heightened concerns about wildfire, given the record-low snowpack. This concern has materialized as wildfires have burned across Utah with nearly 800 wildfires and approaching half a million acres burned. As of the beginning of August, Utah has experienced **794 wildfires that have burned 495,225 acres**. Of these fires, **412 were human-caused, 322 were caused by lightning**, and **60 have a cause yet to be determined**.

Despite a brief notch downward in fire danger in the last half of July due to monsoonal moisture, fire activity remains high at mid-to upper elevations. The potential for large wildfires is expected to continue into September within all of Utah except for the very southernmost counties.

Many who reside in Utah live in the wildland/urban interface (WUI) – the area where people and their living spaces meet or intermix with wildland vegetation. Those living in the WUI have a shared responsibility to be ready for a wildfire, from being prepared for an evacuation to creating firewise landscaping. Taking steps before a wildfire threatens your home and family is imperative. Consider these home ignition zones, broken into three areas, when working to protect your home.

- **Immediate Zone** (0 to 5 feet around the house) – Some refer to this area as the lean, clean, and green zone. It should mostly be devoid of anything combustible. Consider using stone materials instead of wood mulch, having no vegetation (unless you have an irrigated lawn), and removing piles of firewood by the house. Branches from adjacent trees should not reach into this area. This zone also includes your home. Look for open vents where embers could get into the attic and add screens to protect them. Dead needles should be removed at least annually on and around the house. Also be aware that something as simple as a doormat made of natural fibers could collect embers and catch fire.
- **Intermediate Zone** (5 to 30 feet from the home) – Have a well-maintained landscape that is free of weeds and brush. Break up vegetation by using walkways and gravel instead of mulch. Choose deciduous trees over conifers. A single tree and bush are acceptable, but remember, the more foliage, the higher the risk for fire. Ladder fuels, such as tall grasses, shrubs, and low-hanging branches, should be trimmed beneath trees so fire cannot get up into the canopy.
- **Extended Zone** (30 to 100 feet) – Keep in mind that the 30-foot spacing includes structures such as sheds and other buildings that are on your/your neighbor's properties. You can include groupings of vegetation, but they should be thinned and not interconnected with other vegetation. Ladder fuels should be trimmed. The extended zone includes flat terrain and can be extended to 200 feet if a steep slope exists below your home. Many people do not have this much space, so you may need to coordinate with neighbors.

While these measures will not ensure the survival of a structure, they can at least increase the probability of safety and success. The concepts of a home ignition zone will also provide for greater firefighter safety and give fire suppression resources a good chance at saving your home.

Many local fire departments, the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, and county fire wardens can conduct home assessments to help you better understand what can be done to protect your house.

USU Extension is working with interagency partners throughout Utah to help address wildfires. USU Extension and Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands have numerous resources and information to help reduce your wildfire risk:

* The USU Extension website, [Wildfire Preparedness](#), includes resources and links.

* Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands recently updated their website, [Utah Living with Fire](#). It focuses on:

1. Preparing your family
2. Preparing your home
3. Preparing your property

* USU Extension offers the booklet, [Firewise Landscaping in Utah](#), as well as a website about [post-fire recovery](#).

We all need to do our part to develop fire-adapted communities when living in the WUI. It is important to take time now to assess your home and property.

Contact

J. Bradley Washa

Utah State University Extension assistant professor of wildland fire science

Brad.Washa@usu.edu

More Extension Updates

- [Extension News](#)
- [Gardening](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Personal Finance](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [Our Impact](#)

Tips Sign UpTake a CourseDonate to Extension