

USU Extension Expert Shares Lessons Learned from 2025 Utah Wildfires

01/13/2026

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



While the 2025 wildfire season will not be remembered as the worst in Utah's history, there are a few notable points of information, including the number of structures lost.

House Bill 48 –Wildland Urban Interface Modifications (effective Jan 1, 2026) aims to increase awareness of wildfires and encourage property owners to share the responsibility of reducing risk in the wildland-urban interface, or WUI. This WUI zone—where homes and other human development intersect with undeveloped wildland vegetation—poses a heightened risk for wildfires and related environmental conflicts.

The most notable 2025 losses in Utah were the Forsyth Fire, with 19 structures lost, 13 being residences; the Monroe Canyon Fire, with 19 structures lost, most of which were cabins; the Deer Creek Fire, where 13 structures were lost including primary residences, cabins, a Forest Service guard station, and a communications site; and the Millcreek Fire, impacting two buildings and displacing nearly 80 residents.

During a public meeting early in the Forsyth Fire, Chief Robert Hardy of the Pine Valley Fire Department said he hopes it proves as a learning opportunity for the public.

"If there is one word you take away from this, it is 'Firewise,'" he said.

According to Brad Washa, Utah State University Extension assistant professor of wildland fire science, in many Utah and western areas, a built environment is occurring where homes have been constructed in what is called "fire-dependent ecosystems," where wildland fires have historically occurred. The Forsyth Fire was a natural

ignition caused by lightning several days before the fire really showed itself in a "holdover fire" in Forsyth Canyon.

"The Pine Valley fire is unique and concerning because wildfire has occurred regularly around that area, and steps were taken to help reduce the risk of wildfire," Washa said. "This included a fuel break constructed around town after a similar fire in 2016.

"Did this fuel break perform as expected and reduce the fire's behavior before it came near structures and town? I would say yes. For the number of structures lost in Pine Valley in 2025, many more were saved because of Firewise concepts homeowners used around their homes before the fire and because of firefighters' efforts during the wildfire."

Washa said USU Extension recently released [a video interview with Pine Valley residents and firefighters](#).

"We hope it better explains the risks and possible solutions for those living in the WUI," he said. "Out of crisis, we can find learning opportunities."

While the Forsyth Fire video focuses on community resilience, [USU Extension also collaborated with KUTV 2 News](#) in Salt Lake City to look specifically at what homeowners can do to address firewise landscaping.

Going forward, Utah's **Wildland Urban Interface Modifications (HB48)** law aims to reduce wildfire risk in the WUI. Administrative rules went into effect January 1, 2026, mapping the high-risk boundaries with individual lot assessments available to help provide risk-mitigation strategies to property owners. A property fee for those within the high-risk boundary will help support the assessments. Click to learn [more information about the bill](#).

Contact

Brad Washa

Utah State University Extension assistant professor, wildland fire science

Brad.Washa@usu.edu

More Extension Updates

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

- [Our Impact](#)

[Tips Sign Up](#)[Take a Course](#)[Donate to Extension](#)