



THE 2012 WILDFIRE SEASON TO DATE

A few items culled from the wildfire websites, and the national media:

- ◇ A rough estimate is that more than a thousand homes have already been destroyed by wildfire in the western U.S.
- ◇ A contiguous million acres (*1,700 square miles*) of Southeastern Oregon has been blackened by fire. As a reference, the state of Rhode Island is only 1,100 square miles!
- ◇ Entire neighborhoods in Colorado are now smoking ashes (See below).
- ◇ Communities from New Mexico to Montana, including the outskirts of Upton, Worland, and Casper, Wyoming, have been evacuated as fires came close.

And 2012 isn't even a "record" fire season!

The good news is that most of the Bighorn Basin hasn't made the news for these activities.



A NORTHERN COLORADO NEIGHBORHOOD

← Before

After ↓



BIGHORN BASIN FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART

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Special points of interest:

- * What's been happening in the west.
- * The last 2012 cabin owners picnic
- * 9/27 Greybull Volunteer Work Day
- * They also notify of other emergencies
- * Proper siting, and "situations to avoid"
- * If they had been in Big Horn County

Big Horn County Firewise – Volunteer Work Day

Volunteers are needed for a Work-Day along the Bighorn River in Greybull September 27, 2012; from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Work will consist of the cutting of Russian olive and tamarisk re-sprouts and the herbicide application to stumps. Other tasks may include the piling of brush and other fuels mitigation tasks. Volunteers should meet at the Outdoor Classroom by the Highway 14 Bridge east of Lisa’s Restaurant.

This work-day is a follow-up to the Greybull Wildfire Mitigation Project completed last fall with the goal of reducing the hazardous fuels danger along the river.

Big Horn County Weed & Pest District will give a demonstration on the proper mixing and application of herbicide for the treatment of Russian olive and tamarisk.

Mama Z’s Pizza and Big Horn County Firewise will provide free pizza from noon to 1:00 pm at Boat Ramp Park.

For more information contact Chris at (307) 272-9533 or send an email message to:

Firewise@wytfs.com



Please bring sturdy boots, work clothes, leather gloves, safety glasses and water.

ONE MORE LITTLETHING THAT COUNTS



WRONG



RIGHT

Hedges and shrubbery should be kept trimmed to at least three feet below windows, and at least three feet away from the sides of all buildings. Homeowners should also take care to keep dead leaves and twigs from building up under all hedges near buildings.



Cabin owner surveys from the 2012 cabin owners picnics indicate that the only reliable communications in many areas of the Bighorns are face to face between residents. Cell phone and computer links are sporadic and intermittent. Cabin owners are encouraged to investigate the radios mentioned below, as a means of finding out about weather and wildfire activity in their mountain neighborhood.



Weather Radios for Evacuation Notifications



When a forest fire starts, utter chaos often follows. The fire can spread and can move much faster than any human making notification to residents difficult. As a resident living in an area where fires are at high risk, how will you know to get out of the house? Flames could be right up against your house before you even know a fire has been started. Cell phone towers will likely be down, leaving no reception to your phones. There are places firefighters are not permitted to go due to their own safety, making contact to you very difficult. How will you know in time if you need to evacuate? We strongly suggest you get a weather radio. "NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest [National Weather Service office](#). NWR broadcasts [National Weather Service \(NWS\)](#) warnings, watches, forecasts and other [non-weather related hazard](#) information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During an emergency, NWS forecasters interrupt routine broadcasts and send a special tone activating local weather radios. Weather radios equipped with a special alarm tone feature sound an alert to give you immediate information about a life-threatening situation. Working with the [Federal Communication Commission's \(FCC\) Emergency Alert System](#), NWR is an all-hazards radio network, making it the most comprehensive weather and emergency information available to the public. NWR includes [1000 transmitters](#), covering all 50 states." <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/> These radios will get service even when cell phones will not. We have personally driven around communities where even cell phone coverage is questionable and gone to the highest, lowest, and deepest place in the woods with these weather radios testing for service, and we have yet to find a place where they did not work. These are important tools that may save your life. Just set it on your counter, change the batteries (a good guideline for that is to change them every time you change the batteries in your smoke detector). These weather radios will get you information as soon as authorities are informed of the fire, giving you more time to evacuate, getting your belongings and loved ones out of danger.

WE ALL HAVE
A ROLE!

Wildfire
Survival

Many of the cabin owners in the West Tensleep Cabin Group, in the Southern Bighorns, have obtained these radios to make up for spotty coverage by other electronic communication methods. Radios were purchased with a mixture of money from the cabin owners association, and the individual cabin owners. Some mountainous corners of the basin do not have reception for these radios, so you should check with John Hyde, Big Horn County Emergency Management coordinator (307-548-2516) before purchasing these radios. Coverage is improving.

FIREWISE PROPANE TANKS

Safety features on stationery propane tanks rarely allow them to “explode,” but they will vent a “geyser of flame” if overheated with an ignition source nearby. The guidelines below should make that unlikely.

In a residential situation, stationery propane tanks should be:

- * More than 10 feet from buildings or any brush, shrubbery, and other flammable materials.
- * Stable and level on a solid base.
- * If over grass, the surrounding ten feet should be kept mowed.

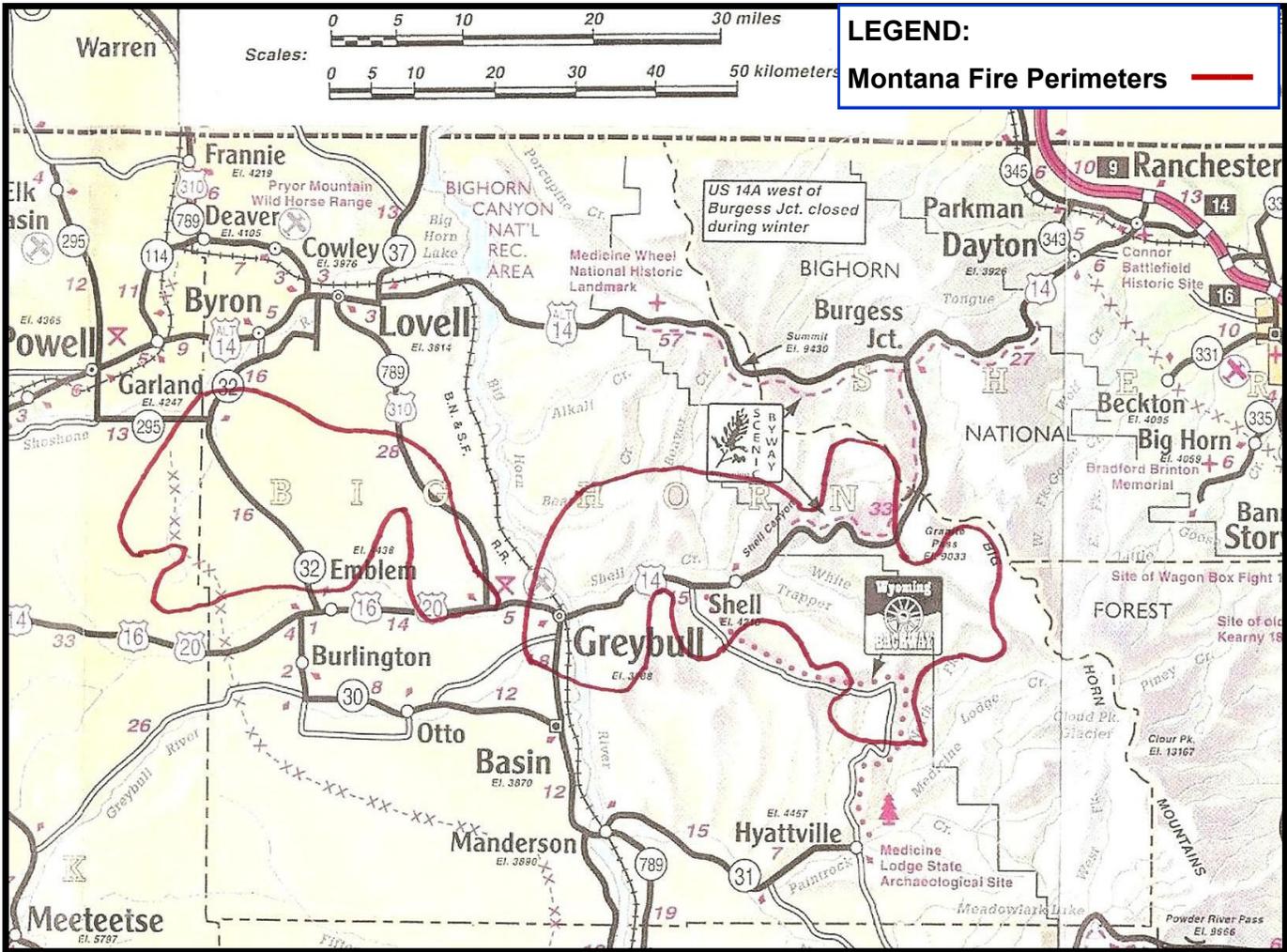
In a forested Firewise application, stationery propane tanks should be:

- * Outside the 30 foot Home Ignition Zone from all buildings.
- * Stable and level on a solid base.
- * Surrounded by at least three feet of bare soil, cinders, or gravel.
- * In an area cleared of brush and shrubbery for more than 10 feet in all directions.
- * At least 20 feet from fuelwood and construction lumber piles.
- * If in a grassy area, the surrounding ten feet should be kept mowed.

In both situations, propane tanks can also be buried, if done by knowledgeable professionals. Even buried tanks need the safety guidelines on the above lists.



Just in case you don't think your home or cabin is ever going to be anywhere near a wildfire see the map below. The red lines overlay the perimeters of two adjacent 2012 wildfires on a map of Big Horn County. These two fires were just across the border in Montana.



And here is a photo from the Fontenelle Fire that's not too far away in Lincoln and Sublette counties in Wyoming. This one burned more than 64,000 acres.

This photo shows the hot fire behavior that would occur when a fire burns on the western slopes of the Bighorn Mountains.

Note the cabins nestled in the forest.

