



10 Ways to Prevent Wildfires in a Texas Drought

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Living in Texas, droughts and wildfires are no strangers to our communities. Most of us have either experienced the damaging effects of these natural disasters firsthand or know someone who has. We've seen quite a surge of such disasters in [recent years](#), proving that the seemingly common Texas drought fuels wildfires. Dry, brittle vegetation and parched plants are highly flammable and can easily be ignited by mother nature or human error.

According to [Texas A&M Forest Service](#), "about 90% of wildfires in Texas are human caused, which means 90% of our wildfires could be prevented with some simple actions."

Don't be part of that 90%. Be proactive. While we cannot control the weather, we can take simple steps to prevent wildfires from happening in the first place. Management associations play a crucial role in taking these steps for their communities alongside homeowners. See 10 ways to stay safe during a Texas drought below.

How to Prevent Wildfires in a Texas Drought: Top 10 Ways

1. Educate homeowners.

Often, people don't realize the impact their actions have on the environment. Associations can raise awareness and educate residents on how their everyday activities may contribute to droughts and wildfires. This may mean emailing helpful material, attaching a Texas drought [safety checklist](#) to your next community newsletter, hosting workshops or seminars, or sharing information on any [local water conservation efforts](#).

2. Promote proper lawn maintenance.

The first step for lawns that can survive even the hottest months is to [plant native grasses in Texas](#). Native grasses are well-adapted to Texas drought conditions and don't need much water. They're already acclimated to Texas soil, so they rarely need chemical fertilizer. Planting more resilient grass allows lawns to live on less water without drying out. This means homeowners can minimize water usage without worrying about the fire hazard of dry, dead grass.

3. Implement fire-resistant landscaping.

Beyond lawn care and grasses, overall plant selection for landscaping plays an important role in strategizing how to prevent wildfires. HOAs can use landscaping to make communities both prettier and safer. Though no plant is 100% fireproof, some plants are more flammable than others. Plants on the [Fire-Wise Landscaping Checklist](#) include the Texas Bluebell, Malavaviscus, and Mexican Primrose. These have a higher moisture content, meaning they're less likely to sustain flames.

Fireproofing the grounds of a community in a Texas drought also means removing any dry vegetation and dead trees. While trees are essential to any community, dead ones are just a liability, especially if combined with high winds and downed power lines. [Power lines have caused more than 4,000 wildfires in Texas](#) over the past few years, resulting from electrically charged wires falling against dead trees.

4. Encourage water conservation.

Conservation is a fundamental way to ensure we all have water when we need it most during a drought in Texas. HOAs can encourage residents to reduce water usage by promoting the benefits of low-flow toilets, showerheads, and faucets. They may even offer incentives for homeowners who plant native grasses, implement drought-resistant landscaping, or use water-efficient irrigation systems responsibly. This is also a good opportunity to provide homeowners the link to the Texas drought map [water data monitor](#) for real-time insight on drought conditions, soil moisture, rainfall outlook, etc. This helps inspire more residents to practice [small, easy ways to save water, both indoors and outdoors](#).

5. Celebrate carefully: fireworks, BBQs, and other summer activities.

Summertime means more outdoor entertainment, like grilling, building campfires, and celebrating the 4th of July. However, careless mishandling of fireworks has led to [numerous disasters during a Texas drought](#). According to the [National Fire Protection Association](#), fireworks are the culprit of more than 19,500 reported fires in the U.S. every year.

Don't let an unwelcome surprise spoil your summer fun if it can be prevented in the first place! Simply brush up on summer safety quick tips, including:

[Fireworks Safety](#)

- Only use [legal, quality fireworks](#).
- If conditions allow, use fireworks outside on concrete, away from any buildings or dry debris.



- Soak used materials in water before throwing them in the trash.

[Grilling Safety](#)

- Use only charcoal and propane grills outside, away from any structures.
- Keep your grill clean and free of grease buildup on racks and trays.
- Never use charcoal fluid or other flammable liquids as these can leak – use a charcoal chimney.

[Fire Pit Safety](#)

- Fire pits and campfires should be at least 10 feet away from all structures and flammable materials.
- Always ensure a nearby water source is accessible before starting a fire, and never start it with gasoline.
- Monitor fire site well after extinguishing it to prevent later flare-ups.

General Summer Safety

- Always check local conditions first on the [Texas drought map](#) before any event.
- Too hot, dry, or windy? Avoid spark-causing activities, like setting off fireworks, [building campfires, or driving on dry grass](#).
- Properly [dispose of cigarettes](#). It may seem like a small thing, but discarded cigarette butts are a common culprit of brush fires.

6. Promote home hardening.

A home's bones can determine if it will survive a wildfire. "Hardening" a home (or any building) means using construction materials that prevent wildfires from damaging it. This can be accomplished by using non-combustible materials, maintaining a debris-free surrounding area, and clearing any trace of embers (small, flammable pieces of wood). Other [ways to harden a home](#) include:

- Roofs and gutters – use fire-resistant roofing materials like metal, tile, or Class A shingles; install metal gutters and gutter guards to keep debris from accumulating.
- Exterior walls – use heat and fire-resistant siding; ensure there are no crevices or holes that could catch embers.
- Windows – install double-paned or tempered-glass windows; use fire-resistant drapes and shutters.

While it may not be possible to install all fire-resistant options immediately, each step increases the survival rate of buildings in high-risk areas during a Texas drought.

7. Create defensible space.

Texas is renowned for its wide-open spaces between communities, and though the scenery is beautiful, it puts us at a higher risk of wildfires during Texas drought months. Associations are responsible for creating and maintaining [defensible space](#) around their communities' edges. If properly maintained, this space will slow or stop a wildfire and prevent it from reaching homeowners' properties. This entails removing any fire risks in these zones around houses and

buildings:

- Immediate zone (0-5 ft.) – remove all flammables around home (firewood, propane tanks, etc.).
- Intermediate zone (5-30 ft.) – clear dry, brittle vegetation.
- Extended zone (30-100 ft.) – remove any heavy accumulation of litter, debris, dead trees, etc.

Response time is everything when it comes to stopping a wildfire. Defensible space is crucial for firefighters who may need to come and defend homes in the community. Associations should ensure first responders can easily navigate the following in their communities:

- Street signs - must be large, reflective, fire-resistant, and visible from both directions.
- Addresses - should be clearly labeled and visible from the street.
- Roads - must be a minimum of 10 feet wide to allow two traffic lanes, should not have too sharp of curves, and dead-end streets should have a designated turn-around area for emergency vehicles.

A real example is captured in [this video from the Holcombe Road Fire in 2020](#). The property survived because of the homeowner's successful usage of defensible space.

8. Develop an emergency plan – know how to respond to a wildfire.

We've talked about how to prevent wildfires, but what about when an emergency like this actually happens?

Associations should consider this as communities are increasingly built further into areas known as the "[wildland-urban interface](#)." These are typically more wildfire-prone areas. With expansion into these more high-risk zones, wildfires can happen any time of year, not just during a Texas drought or what was previously considered a clear fire season.

Every HOA should have a clear crisis plan, including what to do [before, during, and after an emergency](#). This is especially important during a Texas drought. Residents should know where and how to evacuate, what kind of help will be available, and how they will communicate with each other in case of a wildfire. A great management company will provide a 24/7 mass communication system that allows your HOA or COA's management team to quickly send critical updates to all homeowners in an emergency.

If you're a member of your association's board, send homeowners regular reminders [detailing your community's evacuation plan](#) via all communication channels – website, newsletter, meeting announcements, email, and social media. Also remind residents to have a "grab-and-go bag" ready at all times with insurance documents, medications, non-perishable food, and other [emergency essentials](#) in case they need to evacuate their homes.

Fires are dangerous and unpredictable, so know your community's risks and take proactive steps now. See if your association's wildfire mitigation and evacuation plan measures up with this [Firewise USA® risk assessment template here](#).

9. Collaborate with local authorities.

If you serve on the board of your HOA or COA, work with local authorities and organizations to strengthen your community's defense against wildfires, especially during Texas drought months. This can include bringing in [environmental groups](#) to present at meetings, partnering with [city or county officials](#) to implement fire codes and building requirements, or collaborating with [Texas Parks and Recreation coordinators](#) to make your community a [Firewise USA®-recognized site](#).

10. Report warning signs immediately.

Monitor the [Texas drought map](#) and always be on the lookout for [warning signs of wildfires](#). If you see unusual smoke or smell burning in your area, call 911 immediately. Reporting potential hazards early can help prevent disaster and save lives. While some fires are prescribed to dead, dormant vegetation by the [Texas Parks and Recreation Wildland Fire Management team](#), all fires are dangerous, so when in doubt, report any signs of possible wildfire as you see (or smell) them.

In conclusion, associations and homeowners' actions are crucial during a Texas drought. Most wildfires start with something that could have been avoided in the first place, so it's up to each of us to take the necessary steps to prevent wildfires today. In the words of [Smokey Bear](#), "Only you can prevent wildfires."

If you need more pointers on fireproofing your community, we're happy to help. [Contact FirstService Residential Texas today.](#)

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