



May 1, 2018

Re: Participation in the FEMA Sprinkler Grant Programs (2001-2015)

Dear Property Owner:

You are among the close to 600 program participants who have benefited from the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Program dating back to 2001. Since the 1999 Blowdown, the Firewise Committee and Cook County Emergency Management pursued local, state, and federal programs and grants to assist Cook County property owners with wildfire protection, education and assistance. This is a reminder concerning your obligations under the program.

The property owner is responsible for maintaining any equipment and defensible space installed with FEMA assistance. This maintenance agreement is a requirement of the FEMA pre-disaster mitigation grants. Participating in the FEMA grant program obligates the property owner to maintain quality defensible space and a fully operational sprinkler system in perpetuity. This requirement is attached to the property and does not end if the property is sold. The grant allows for the maintenance to be accomplished by: a) you the property owner, b) a neighbor/friend, trained members of your property owner association, or c) a trained wildfire mitigation system installer under contract to perform this maintenance.

Maintenance of both quality defensible space and the sprinkler system is a small price to pay for protection in the event of a wildfire. It is unlikely that Cook County will be eligible for this type of wildfire mitigation grant in the future. In addition, properties that benefited in the past are not eligible for any future grants of this kind.

Enclosed with this letter are two documents listing the specifics steps needed to maintain a fully functioning wildfire sprinkler system and quality defensible space, defined as a low or moderate rating based on a Level 2 Firewise Assessment.

If you are interested in contacting a sprinkler system installer for maintenance and/or a contractor to assist with maintaining defensible space, visit the information for homeowners section of our website: www.cookcountyfirewise.org/information-for-homeowners/brush-removal-contractors/

If you have any questions, contact the office of Emergency Management & Public Information at 218-387-3059 or firewise@co.cook.mn.us.

Best Regards,

Cook County Firewise Committee

Firewise Defensible Space Guidelines

The FEMA Sprinkler Assistance Grants require property owners to maintain quality defensible space within the Home Ignition Zone 1. Ideally property owners should strive for meeting the guidelines in zones 1 and 2.

Home Ignition Zone 1: The home and its immediate surroundings up to 30 feet

- No flammable items or vegetation within 5 feet of the home
- Protect the home from embers using 1/8" metal screen to enclose under decks, open foundations, and open soffits/vents
- Clean debris buildup from gutters and other areas
- Use low-flammability plants and landscaping materials, no wood mulch
- Space conifer trees 20 feet between crowns
- Prune limbs 6-10 feet up from the ground or 1/3 tree height
- Prune branches within 10 feet of chimneys and roof overhangs
- Remove smaller conifers growing between and underneath larger trees
- Remove dead and down vegetation materials
- Mow grass to 4 inches or less and water regularly during dry periods
- No firewood or propane tanks located in this zone

Home Ignition Zone 2: 30 - 100 feet from home

- 30 feet between conifer tree clusters or 12 feet between individual conifer trees
- Prune branches and leaves 6-10 feet from ground
- Remove smaller conifers growing between and underneath larger trees
- Remove heavy accumulation of flammable debris
- Remove dead trees and plants
- Create and maintain fuel breaks such as driveways, walkways, mowed lawns

Even Better.....Home Ignition Zone 3: 100 - 200 feet from home

- Remove heavy accumulation of woody debris
- Remove smaller conifers growing between and underneath larger trees
- Reduce density of taller conifer trees

Road and driveway access to structures

- Road width of at least 20 feet AND 14 feet of height clearance
- Road cul-de-sac with a 100-foot diameter or other large turnaround area
- Driveway width of at least 12 feet AND 14 feet of height clearance
- Large driveway turnaround area near the structure for emergency vehicles

**Note little to no vegetation removal should occur within the 50-foot Shoreland Ordinance Zone, regardless of location within the Home Ignition Zone.*

Watch a video on defensible space and keeping your property Firewise at cookcountyfirewise.org

What does maintaining your sprinkler system involve?

Starting from the lake...

- Your suction line cannot have leaks, breaks or abrasions. Any air leak will cause the system to lose suction and thus make it inoperable
- Is your foot valve and screen off the bottom of the lake? If not, it can draw in sand and debris that will damage the pump. The foot valve should be submerged in at least 3 feet of water to protect it from wave action.
- Is your pump system on a stand or a secure base high enough so it will be on dry land during high water? Is the stand sturdy and secure?
- If you use gasoline to run your pump, has the old gas from last year been drained from the tank and the carburetor? If you did not drain your tank did you treat the gasoline with a fuel stabilizer?
- You must have enough oil on the indicator stick or your system won't run. Is the oil clear? If it's black and thick it must be changed. It's recommended to change oil every 50 hours of run time.
- Are your two propane tanks accessible? The larger tank (50#) should be full and only used when you need to evacuate your property. A smaller tank (20#) should be used for day to day operations and testing.
- Is the main supply line from the pump, usually 3" and 2" PVC pipe, accessible and clear from debris, fallen branches, overgrown grass and weeds? In order to inspect and properly drain your system, the entire supply line should have a 3' clearance. With the system running you should check the PVC line and fittings for leaks and/or breaks. All hose connections should be visible and accessible.
- The black rubber hoses that run from the PVC line to the sprinkler heads need to be accessible and intact.
- Sprinkler heads not on buildings must be clear of debris and overgrowth. There should be at least a clear 3' radius surrounding the sprinkler heads so that they rotate 360 degrees. Clear away branches and bushes that obstruct the sprinkler heads.
- All the sprinkler heads on your system should be fully operational when the pump is running. If there is an obstruction in the nozzle you will have decreased water pressure and/or the head will not rotate.
- Is your stand pipe (this is the fire hose connection valve) well marked with a yellow hydrant sign? Is it clearly accessible?
- You must start your system each spring and run it long enough to walk the entire system and inspect the lines and sprinkler heads. It is the BEST practice to start your system once a month. If you can see the tallest sprinkler head or the one that is farthest from your pump and it has a full steady stream then your system is intact.
- You really can't overuse your system. The Ham Lake fire taught us that it's not just OK to have a sprinkler system if it is not fully operational when it is needed. In an emergency situation there won't be enough time to make necessary repairs.