

## **Protecting Our Community: Wildland Fire Safety for Sun Ranch**

As we look toward the 2026 season, the safety of our homes and landscapes is a top priority. Recent reports from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicate a significant "snow drought" across the West, with snowpack levels reaching record lows in many areas. This lack of winter moisture means that vegetation is likely to dry out much earlier than usual, potentially kicking off an early and extended fire season.

To ensure the Sun Ranch Owners Association remains a safe and resilient community, we ask all members to take the following proactive steps:

### **IS YOUR ADDRESS VISIBLE?**

Make your address visible!! Seconds count in an emergency, and if your address is not visible, then seconds turn into minutes! Make sure it stands out, and it can be easily seen at 2:00 AM in the dark of night!

Finding homes in this valley can be a challenge as our first responders don't have the luxury of modern technology when it comes to mapping since we don't have cell service. So please make sure your address is visible!

### **Understanding "1-Hour Fuels"**

Wildfires are often driven by "1-hour fuels." These are fine, flashy materials—such as dry grass, dead leaves, pine needles, and small twigs—that are less than 1/4 inch in diameter.

#### **Why they matter**

Because of their small size, these fuels respond almost instantly to weather changes. They can dry out and become highly ignitable after just one hour of dry weather, even following a light rain.

#### **The Wind Factor**

Because these fuels are so light, even the slightest breeze can cause a fire to spread with terrifying speed. Wind provides a constant supply of oxygen and "pre-heats" the fuel ahead of the flames, allowing a small spark in the grass to become an uncontrollable wall of fire in minutes.

#### **The Risk**

These fuels are the primary "carriers" that allow a fire to spread rapidly across the landscape and reach your home.

## **Creating Defensible Space**

Defensible space is the buffer you create between a building and the surrounding wildland to slow or stop the spread of fire.

### **Zone 1 (0–5 feet)**

The "Ember-Resistant Zone." Focus on hardscaping (gravel/concrete) and removing all dead plants, debris, and combustible mulch from next to your foundation and under decks.

### **Zone 2 (5–30 feet)**

Keep this area "Lean, Clean, and Green." Remove dead vegetation, trim overhanging branches at least 10 feet from chimneys, and space out trees.

### **Zone 3 (30–100 feet)**

Reduce fuel by mowing annual grass to a maximum height of 4 inches and removing "ladder fuels"—low-hanging branches that allow fire to climb into the treetops.

## **Trimming Egress Routes**

In an emergency, your driveway is the only way out for you and the only way in for firefighters. Please ensure all driveways and access roads are cleared of overhanging brush and low tree limbs.

If your property has a Sun Ranch easement road going through it, you are responsible for ensuring the easement follows the below clearances.

### **Standard Clearance**

Aim for a minimum of 13.5 feet of vertical clearance and 12 feet of horizontal width to accommodate a large fire engine. Keep the grasses short that are next to the roads that run through your property. If feasible, also keep those grasses short about 10-15 feet back from the road edges to keep the fire flame lengths minimal next to roadways, which are often used as fire breaks in fire fighting.

## **Follow Burning Regulations**

The days of "not knowing that I can't burn" no longer exist. Given the possibility of high fire risk this year, it is more critical than ever to follow all local burning regulations. Before considering any outdoor burning, check for active burn bans or permit requirements. It is up to us property owners to try and mitigate the fuel loads on our properties by keeping them firewise as much as possible.

If burning is allowed and you choose to burn, ensure that you are following the regulations for burning. Tickets by the Sheriff's Office will be levied upon landowners if it is found you are in violation of any outdoor burning rules or burn bans. There will be ZERO tolerance. We have too much to lose in this beautiful valley by someone burning recklessly.

Sun Ranch falls under (3) jurisdictions for burning. Okanogan County, DNR and Okanogan County Fire District #16. They all typically will fall in line with each other and default to the highest level of burn ban when put in place. If needed, check with each entity to find out if a burn ban is in place.

By working together now, we can protect our homes and the beautiful environment we share at Sun Ranch.

Here are some important links to gather information on burning:

**Okanogan County Website:**

<https://www.okanogancounty.gov/406/Burn-Ban-Information>

**Okanogan County Emergency Management Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/Okanogan.County.Emergency.Management>

**DNR Burn Restrictions:**

<https://dnr.wa.gov/wildfire-resources/outdoor-burning/burn-restrictions>

**Fire District #16 Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/AeneasValleyFD/>