

Wild Fire Prevention: Questions for Fire Chief Norvin Collins

- 1) How can we be “fire wise” while maintaining the natural beauty of our surroundings on Mount Dallas?
 - a) FireWise has a goal of making your house fire safe should a fast moving fire approach. It is not about creating a sterile environment. Recommendation: start in the 5’ circle and clean things up around.
 - b) that all these recommendations are for fire danger/risk areas, which we aren’t. We want to minimize our risks while maintaining our natural beauty.
- 2) What are the biggest fire hazards on Mount Dallas?
 - a) Biggest hazards are the large amounts of downed trees and tree litter. These can be minimized but it will take a community effort.
- 3) Are Salal and Ocean Spray fire hazards? Are shrubs fire hazards?
 - a) Any plant that has an oily quality to it can be a fire hazard; however, used in limited places are perfectly fine. The idea is to reduce the opportunity for the shrub light on fire by keeping grasses short, for example.
- 4) What are some simple steps we can take to prevent wildfires?
 - a) Support FireWise practices
 - b) Keep grasses short
 - c) Clean up downed trees
 - d) Move combustibles away from your house
 - e) <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire>
- 5) In case of a wildfire or emergency on Mount Dallas, is it better to evacuate quickly or shelter in place?
 - a) It is better to stay in place unless directed by emergency responders. In the case of a needed evacuation from the area, Incident Command will notify people in the area. Leaving the area will impact the ability for responders to get to the incident in a timely manner.
- 6) What is a reverse 911 directory and when do you use it? When don’t you use it?
 - a) Reverse 911 is the ability to use the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) to call phone numbers within a geographic area. It is used rarely; it can better to directly contact residents in the area if needed. There is a process we follow to activate it.
- 7) Can we use the exit along Trout Lake in the case of an emergency?
 - a) In an emergency, yes. Recommend connecting with Town Administration for guidelines. Following discussions, we should all connect for access needs and gate locks.
- 8) When you refer to ladder fuels, what do you mean? What should we do to reduce or prevent the existence of these?
 - a) Ladder fuels are any combustible that allows a fire to go from ground level up into other combustibles, i.e. scrub brush lighting from grasses and then lighting trees
 - b) FireWise and fuel mitigation recommendations can reduce ladder fuels

- c) Keep grasses cut low and limit numbers of scrubs around trees
- 9) What is DNR? When is it deployed?
- a) DNR: Department of Natural Resources
 - b) SJIF&R has the contract with DNR to provide immediate response. We request DNR support when needed
 - c) It is a coordinated response if needed to protect our community
- 10) What are the top 3 things we can we do on Mount Dallas to make it safer and more fire wise?
- a) Take care of what you can control
 - i) 5' clean up around your property
 - ii) Look to the 30' defensible space
 - iii) Then 100'
 - b) Keep grasses short
 - c) Reduce ladder fuels
- 11) Is there a recommended, maximum tree density per acre that would reduce fire hazard?
- a) Ladder fuel clean up and shorter grasses is a better initial step than density for our area
 - b) Our fuel profile is better from a fire risk view than other areas in the state
 - c) Fire danger areas have suggestions for 30' and 100' zones if you want to go to that level
- 12) Is there a recommended distance that trees and shrubs should be from homes?
- a) Recommendation vary from 5', 30' and 100'
 - b) See above resource from FireWise
- 13) Is it ok to stack firewood outside the home?
- a) Stacking wood near/adjacent to the house is a risk
 - b) Protected wood stacks near house can be ok with protection around it
 - c) Best practice is to not stack wood next to house
- 14) With many very tall pine trees on the property, we understand we should have crowns 6' apart. This is likely possible around the house, be would be a lot of trees to remove over a 10-acre parcel. Would it be best to remove trees around grouping of trees or what is recommended?
- a) See above reference
 - b) Start small and move out to bigger areas and validate what you see from a natural/beauty point of view
 - c) Recommendation to not take on too much, too fast and burn out; this is a marathon not a sprint. Think safe and workable as opposed to perfect
- 15) Does the fire department inspect property in the neighborhood to encourage Firewise compliance?
- a) We can and will review a community plan and give recommendations by reviewing onsite risks
 - b) FireWise and risk mitigation are not enforceable; however, we can make recommendations and work with you and your neighbors to make things safer
- 16) Where should firewood be safely stored?
- a) Storing fire wood away from the house in a clear area would be safest
 - b) If you have an area down to mineral soil (no vegetation), then the fire wood within that it is safest
 - c) Look to the resources for fuel tanks and wood
 - i) <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>
- 17) Ladder Fuel: Branches hanging less than 20 feet from the ground per Firewise guidelines – which should be taken care of first? Dead branches or live branches?
- a) Dead branches first; live ones have moisture and don't burn as well

- b) Thinning the limbs is safer yet don't remove more than 1/3 of the branches up the tree
 - c) The idea is to not have the heat radiate into the branches to start the tree on fire
 - i) Limit ladder fuels and keep grasses low
 - ii) Remove density around the trees to keep the heat low should there be a fire to protect the trees
- 18) Dead standing trees, how important that these be taken down and turned into firewood or whatever?
- a) Important but not the most important. Managing the trees are more of a safety item than an immediate fire hazard. When a tree is dead, the odds increase of it falling when you don't want it to. If possible, manage the dead trees when you are doing the debris cleanup
- 19) Small live trees, firs, cedars and others- these are less than 20 feet, can they be protected?
- a) Yes, keep the ladder fuels and grasses low while watching over clumping/density of the trees
- 20) Which local trees are more flammable?
- a) There are many that are less flammable or more flammable. Suggest connecting with a local Master Gardener or WSU outreach for recommendations
- 21) What kind of brush is more flammable? For example, ocean spray vs rose bushes, etc.
- a) See above answer
 - b) While this is for a drier area of Washington, it gives you a good idea of different plants. Be sure to look for one appropriate for our climate and region
- 22) Where is it safe to use wood chips? How flammable are they in a wild fire?
- a) Yes, it is safe to use wood chips. Any combustible can burn or smolder. Keeping items moist and protected from discarded flammables are best. You are fortunate on Mt Dallas that the odds of discarded cigarettes is very limited, so yard landscaping with wood chips is pretty safe; additionally, the shaded areas are good because the chips don't dry out even during the heat of the summer.

The Fire District is happy to come out to discuss specifics with any of you are an onsite group. Thanks for the opportunity to talk and the dialog was great! If you need more or have additional questions, don't hesitate to reach out.