



PENNSYLVANIA LUMBERMENS MUTUAL  
INSURANCE COMPANY

## BRUSH FIRE HAZARD

Brush fires are a hazard that many businesses face on an ongoing basis, but especially in the dry summer months. With proper clearance and maintenance, your business will stand a much better chance of surviving a brush fire. To protect your property and business income, there are steps that you can follow to help avoid a catastrophic loss. Below are key elements of a brush fire hazard control program that will reduce or eliminate the possibility of a brush fire from impacting your business operations.

Immediately start and maintain a *Brush Hazard Abatement Program*. You may start by cutting back native brush or vegetation and prune trees that may be impeding on any structures on your property. At a minimum, maintain a defensive space of at least 100 feet around your property, and do it now! This clear space will not only impede the progress of a fire, but will provide for access and working space for fire fighters that may be called to respond to a brush fire on your property.

Make sure that there are reasonable access roads to all areas of your facility. Fire fighting equipment must be able to get close to your buildings to effectively extinguish any fire that may occur. Driveways and bridges must be strong enough to support the weight of heavy emergency vehicles that may be required to carry equipment such as bulldozers, being transported on large trucks. Make sure that long driveways have turnaround areas that are wide enough for emergency vehicles.

Prominently display your business address and street name in numbers and letters that are at least four inches tall and appear on a contrasting background. The address should be clearly visible from a distance of 150 feet in all travel directions. If your business is located away from the road, post your address at the entrance of your driveway.

Locate all LPG tanks for the storage of butane or propane at least 100 feet from any structure where possible. Maintain an unobstructed clearance around the tank(s) of at least 30 feet. All firewood and non-production lumber, should be stacked a minimum of 100 feet from any building or structure on your property. In addition maintain a clear space around any stack of at least 30 feet.

A program of lawn and grounds preventative maintenance needs to be established. The program should include a regular schedule of mowing and cutting back natural and ornamental vegetation from impeding on any of your buildings or structures. In addition to cutting and trimming vegetation, you may need to regularly rake leaves and remove tree limbs and branches from your property.

Tree trimming is another concern that needs to be addressed by your preventative maintenance program. Trees should be trimmed at least 5 feet from the ground so that a grass fire does not go up into the tree and towards your property. Remove all dead growth on overhanging limbs that are extending over roof areas. Remove any portion of any tree that extends within 10 feet of the outlet of any chimney or heating pipe.

Be aware of the hazard that is unique to flat roof areas. Flat roof areas have the potential to catch on fire more easily due to their potential to accumulate combustible materials like twigs, branches, and leaves. In addition to the fire hazard caused by the accumulation of natural materials, flat roofs also have the potential of collapse from the added weight and the potential of backed-up drains creating standing water weight on roof areas.

All chimneys and spark producing heating vents should be inspected on an annual basis. Each chimney or exhaust vent should be equipped with a non-flammable fire screen of ½ inch or smaller mesh. This mesh screening should also be installed beneath porches, loading docks, and building floor areas. The wire mesh will help to prevent burning embers from entering these areas.

This article is a guideline to help identify some of the more important and basic fire safety steps that will give your business a better chance of survival in the event of a brush or vegetation fire. By following the steps and tips outlined above, you will have addressed some of the important areas of concern, that are responsible for many of the property fires that result from the hazards of brush and vegetation.