

# Assessing Your Homesite After A Wildfire

by: Lloyd Walker, CSU Extension Agricultural Engineer

A wildfire sweeping across a homesite may cause damage even though the house survives. The intense heat, burning embers and flames associated with such a fire may damage the following elements in a house:

- **Roof** – roofing materials may buckle, partially melt, or burn. This could cause leaks.
- **Windows and doors** – windows and doorframes may warp and weather stripping may be damaged. Windows may break. Provide temporary coverings for windows and doors as needed.
- **Siding** – depending on the siding material, it may warp, melt or burn. Paint may be damaged.
- **Structure** – roofs and floors may have sustained structural damage if the house is partially burned. Use caution in this situation and get an assessment by a builder, contractor or engineer.
- **Utilities** – utilities may be disrupted as a result of a fire. Allow the utility companies to reconnect central system utilities (i.e. electricity, water, natural gas). If the utilities are on site (i.e. propane tanks or a private well) have an appropriate trained professional assess the system and reactivate it.
- **Septic system** – since the components of this system (tank, leach field and lines) are underground, it is unlikely to be damaged. However, a leach field could be damaged if fire-fighting vehicles drive over it.

Considering the above list of potential damage, assess which of the following restoration tasks need to be accomplished:

- securing the site against further damage
- estimating structural damage
- repairing structural damage
- general cleaning and repair of structures and site

If the house has been damaged, contact your insurance company. Develop a plan on how to approach the above tasks and who will perform them. Depending on the level of damage, assistance of a building or utility professional may be required.