

Homes can be wildfire resistant

(Editor's note: The following article is an update to a Did you know article that ran during last year's severe drought. Though conditions have changed to some degree, fire danger remains a concern at Fort Sill.)

Did you know you can help avoid a wildfire at your home?

We all have seen the horrific wildfires devastating parts of Colorado, and though we've received some rainfall this year, we are headed into the dry season where fire danger will increase with each 100-degree, rainless day. I would like everyone to help us better protect our post, our community and our neighbors.

record high temperatures and was in the midst of one of the worst droughts since the Dust Bowl. This year, we're a little better off, but many reservoirs are still low.

When designing and installing a fire-wise landscape, consider the following tips:

- local area fire history;
- site location and overall terrain;
- prevailing winds and seasonal weather;
- property contours and boundaries;
- native vegetation;
- plant characteristics and placement; and
- irrigation requirements.

Give yourself added protection with fuel breaks such as driveways, gravel walkways and lawns.



Did you know?

By Col. Paul Hossenlopp
Fort Sill Garrison commander

To create a fire-wise landscape, the primary goal is fuel reduction. To that end, initiate the zone concept.

Zone 1 is closest to the structure; Zones 2-4 move progressively further away.

The first zone is the well-irrigated area that surrounds the structure for at least 30 feet on all sides, providing space for fire suppression equipment in the event of an emergency.

Plantings should be limited to carefully spaced, low flammability species. The second zone should have low flammability plant materials. Plants should be low-growing and the irrigation system should extend into this section.

The third zone should have low-growing plants and well-spaced trees, remembering to keep the volume of

vegetation low, which can serve to fuel a fire.

The farthest zone from the structure is a natural area. Selectively prune and thin all plants and remove highly flammable vegetation.

Any structures attached to the house, such as decks, porches, fences and out-buildings should be considered part of the house. These structures can act as fuel bridges, particularly if constructed from flammable materials. Therefore, consider the following.

If you wish to attach an all-wood fence to your house, use masonry or metal as protective barriers between the fence and house.

Use metal when construct-

ing a trellis and cover it with high-moisture, low flammability vegetation.

Prevent combustible materials and debris from accumulating beneath patio decks or elevated porches. To screen or box-in areas below patios and decks, use wire screening no larger than 1/8-inch mesh.

Make sure an elevated wooden deck is not at the top of a hill where it will be in direct line of a fire moving up-slope, consider a terrace instead.

Following these few simple tips can greatly reduce the chance of a wildfire consuming your house should a fire breakout in your neighborhood. *Note: Some information in this article is from www.firewise.org.*

Army expanding, upgrading Gray Eagle fleet

By Kris Osborn, Assistant Secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology

The Army is upgrading its fleet of MQ-1C Gray Eagle Unmanned Aircraft Systems while also advancing plans to equip each 10-15,000 Soldier division with its reconnaissance, surveillance, targeting and acquisition capabilities, officials said.

"The feedback we've gotten from our warfighters down range is that this system is a game changer - it is really enhancing our ability," said Maj. Gen. Tim Crosby, with Program Executive Officer - Aviation. "Soldiers have been able to take this great technology and put it into the war quickly with great results."

At a recent Defense Acquisition Board, Pentagon officials approved an Army plan to acquire 29 more aircraft as part of a long-term plan to equip each division with a Gray Eagle company consisting of a full-spectrum Combat Aviation Brigade of 12 aircraft, Crosby said.

"The world will continue to be a dangerous place. Having that organic reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition, or RSTA, capability at the division level will be a real asset," said Rich Kretzschmar, unmanned aircraft systems,



Photo by Spc. Roland Hale

An MQ-1C Gray Eagle unmanned aircraft makes its way down an airfield on Camp Taji, Iraq, before a surveillance mission in the Baghdad area, in this undated file photo. The Army plans to upgrade and buy 29 more of the Gray Eagles.

or UAS, deputy project manager.

The Gray Eagle is a Hellfire missile-equipped, 3,600-pound UAS with a 56-foot wingspan and the ability to fly and send back images and sensor data for nearly 24 hours at altitudes up to 25,000 feet.

Two quick reaction capabilities units, each consisting of four aircraft, ground control stations and supporting equipment, are deployed in Afghanistan. Additionally, a Gray Eagle company of 12 aircraft is serving in Afghanistan.

Overall, the Gray Eagle has flown more than 24,000 combat hours and maintained an operational avail-

ability at about 85 percent, said Col. Tim Baxter, UAS project manager. The Gray Eagle quick reaction capability, or QRC, represents an effort to send emerging technology to theater as a way to refine requirements for an acquisition program, upgrade the sensors and software and provide Soldiers the battlefield advantage of using its technology, all while simultaneously preserving the milestones, checks, balances and procedures central to a formal program of record procurement effort, officials explained.

"This is a contingency based program. We've put kits in the field while simul-

taneously in the background developed the system as part of a program of record. This has been a [repetitive] process," said Baxter. "We added additional avionics and a communications relay capability. We have a laundry list of 15 to 25 things that we have added over the last three or four years. Right now in theater, Gray Eagles are flying 70 to 90 hours a day."

Part of the rationale for the QRC is to harness key input and feedback from Soldiers using the system as a way to improve the aircraft, and in some instances, help add new capability.

Gray Eagles QRCs have

been operating in theater since 2009, said Crosby.

"This program has been such a success because this is one of those nontraditional acquisition programs. We have grown this capability in the hands of Soldiers since its inception. We started out with some prototypes and put some out there in the theater and started learning," noted Crosby. "We've continued to learn. We get feedback from the Soldiers as we go, and the system has done so well that we keep adding to it. We have been focused on giving warfighter capability."

Along these lines, further planned upgrades to the Gray Eagle system involve the addition of synthetic aperture radar, or SAR, ground moving target indicator, known as GMTI, sensor and an air data relay, or ADR, capability.

Kretzschmar said that ADR capability gives Soldiers and UAS operators the ability to pass information from one air vehicle to another from ground control stations.

"If you don't have a line-of-sight connection and you want to extend your range, air data relay gives you that ability," said Kretzschmar. "Air data relay is expected to prove extremely useful in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan where obtaining line-of-sight connections can prove to be more difficult."

"If you are operating in an environment where satellite communications is not available, this allows you to move your data from bird to bird without having to rely on satellite communication," Baxter said.

Plans to improve Gray Eagle capability are the latest in a series of upgrades to the system taking place over several years, Crosby said. Each time the sensors are upgraded, new software is integrated into the system as well.

"When we first put this system in theater, it was just a Gray Eagle with an electro-optical/infrared, sensor.

"Then, we put missiles on it. Now, we are going to put SAR, GMTI and ADR capabilities on it. These are combat enhancements our warfighters are calling for," Crosby said.

The Gray Eagle acquisition program is preparing for a formal initial operational test and evaluation, later this summer. During the test and evaluation, it will formally demonstrate its capabilities while working in tandem with the Army's Block III Apache attack helicopter.

The Gray Eagle is capable of what is called Level IV M a n n e d - U n m a n n e d Teaming, a technological advance in which helicopter pilots can view live feeds from a nearby UAS in real time, fly the UAS and control the sensor payload.

Happy 4th of July 2012

To all my friends and neighbors in Lawton/Ft. Sill and In Honored Memory of Rodney Eidsness MSGT/Retired and in loving tribute to his everlasting smile.

*He never let the pain show through
Just an everlasting smile.
He loved to sit around with his friends
To reminisce a while.
He spoke of soldier days gone by
And things he often dreamt of.
His wonderful wife, sons and daughter,
And the grand kids. Oh, so much love!
I loved to hear him as he sang
On many special occasions.
"The Lord's Prayer" and "Bless This House"
Made Sunday's a real celebration.
It seems we shared so many times
Of happiness and sorrow.
I must believe I'll see him again.
Who knows, maybe even tomorrow!
I know he's happy as can be.
No more pain or strife.
And Rodney truly had the Lord
As the Power in his life.*



I shall miss you dear friend
And though you've passed away,
I shall look at "your place
in church and know
Your Everlasting Smile is here to stay!
Love, Angie

P.S. Proudly Rodney had served 21 years in US Army Aviation (two in Vietnam) as (Helicopter Crew Chief). He was a God fearing, loving, husband, dad and granddad, proud Soldier. Rodney has gone to the Lord (November 17, 1992) at 59 only now sleeps with his fellow comrades at arms in Ft. Sill Post Cemetery. Sleep in Peace sweetheart until we meet again in a better place with our Lord. God Bless America, Happy 4th of July.

The Eidsness Family
Steven, Kenny, Gary, Kevin and Linda Jackson/Eidsness,
Mrs. Margarete Eidsness (Widow)

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