

Reduce Your Risk of Wildfire

The threat of wildfire is real. And although the land we call home is beautiful, it can also be deadly when wildfire strikes. But there are steps you can take to help reduce the risk of wildfire damage to your home. Just follow these 10 simple steps and you'll create the most effective safeguard against wildfire for your home.

Define your defensible space.

Defensible space is a buffer zone, a minimum 30-foot non-combustible area around your house that reduces the intensity and risk of a wildfire from starting or spreading to your home.

Reduce flammable vegetation, trees and brush around your home.

When needed, replace flammable landscaping with their fire-resistive counterparts. Choose plants with loose branching habits, non-resinous woody material, high moisture content in leaves, and little seasonal accumulation of dead vegetation.

Remove or prune trees.

If you live in a wooded area, reduce the density of surrounding forests by removing or thinning overcrowded or weakened trees. Check with local agencies for guidelines on tree removal before clearing or thinning your property. Be sure to prune low-hanging branches to keep a ground fire from climbing into upper branches.

Cut grass and weeds regularly.

Fire spreads rapidly in dry grass and weeds. Mow grasses and other low vegetation and keep them well-watered, especially during periods of high fire danger.

Relocate wood piles and leftover building materials.

Stack all wood, building debris and other burnable materials at least 30 feet away from your home and other buildings. Keep flammable materials like fuel tanks at least 30 feet away from the home. Then clear away flammable vegetation within 10 feet of wood/debris piles and fuel tanks as an additional safeguard against the spread of wildfire.

Keep your roof and yard clean.

Clear pine needles, leaves and debris from your roof, gutters and yard to eliminate an ignition source from tinder-dry vegetation. Remove dead limbs and branches within 10 feet of your chimney and deck. Tidying up is especially important during the hot, arid months of fire season when a single spark can lead to an inferno.

Signs, addresses and access.

Easy-to-read road signs and address numbers that are visible from the road allow firefighters to find your home quickly in an emergency. Safe, easy access to your property includes two-way roads that can accommodate emergency vehicles and give them space to turn around. Bridges should support the weight of emergency vehicles. Driveways should also be trimmed of peripheral vegetation to allow emergency equipment to reach your house. Contact your local fire department for recommendations on access and signage.

Rate your roof.

Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your house in a wildfire. If you have a wood shake roof, consider treatment or replacement to make it more fire-resistive. If you have a fireplace or woodstove, install an approved spark arrestor on your chimney to prevent sparks from reaching your roof or flammable vegetation.

Recycle yard debris and branches.

Check into alternative disposal methods like composting or recycling. Burning may be restricted or not allowed in your community, and should only be used as a last resort. Always contact your local fire department for current burning regulations before striking a match.

What to do when fire strikes.

Monitor your local media for fire reports and evacuation procedures and centers. Keep an emergency checklist handy and prepare to evacuate if your neighborhood is threatened. You should know at least two exit routes from your neighborhood. Proper preparation includes closing all windows and doors, arranging garden hoses so they can reach any area of your house, and packing your car for quick departure.

