

living with WILDFIRE

a guide for the homeowner
in Santa Cruz County

Learn about what creates them, what fuels them, how to prepare for them, as well as tips on protecting your property, home, family and community against wild fires





Prepare now!

Preping your home and property

www.readyforwildfire.org
www.firesafesantacruz.org

Free or subsidized chipping services

www.firesafesantacruz.org/chipping-programs

Disposing of brush or other refuse properly

Use your local landfill, chipping or burning.

Backyard Burn Permits

Check with you local fire department or CalFire for inforamtion on burn season and permits requirements.

Prescribed Burning

calpba.org/centralcoastpba

Forest Health and Tree Management

www.rcdsantacruz.org (Forest Management Plans)
 Local certified arborists

Useful Websites

www.firesafesantacruz.org

Fire Safe Council
 of Santa Cruz County

www.rcdsantacruz.org

Resource Conservation District
 of Santa Cruz County

www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us

Santa Cruz County
 Office of Response,
 Recovery & Resilience

www.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA Natural Resource
 Conservation Service

amahmutsunlandtrust.org

Amah Mutsun Land Trust

www.fire.ca.gov

California Department of
 Forestry & Fire Protection

www.cnps.org

California Native Plant Society
 Fire Recovery Guide

green-gardener.org

Monterey Bay Friendly
 Landscaping

www.fireweather.org

San Jose State University
 Fire Weather Research Lab

calpba.org/centralcoastpba

Central Coast Prescribed
 Burn Association

Never Be Out Of Touch During An Emergency - Register With CodeRED

Registering for CodeRED, the regional reverse 911 service for Santa Cruz County, is one way to ensure that you will be informed and prepared in the event of an emergency.

This is especially important to do if your cell phone has an out-of-area area code. You will receive evacuation notices, bio-terrorism

alerts, missing person reports, and severe weather alerts.

Learn more or register today at
www.scr911.org



Funding provided by a grant from the Cooperative Fire Program of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Pacific Southwest Region, through California Fire Safe Council. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the California Fire Safe Council, the U.S. Forest Service or the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names of commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by California Fire Safe Council, the U.S. Forest Service or the U.S. Government. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance.

Other numbers or websites



Special thanks to the Burn institute for allowing the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County to customize this brochure for our local region. Updates were a collaboration of the Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, and County of Santa Cruz Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience.

living with WILDFIRE

Learn how wildfire is a real threat, and the steps you can take to be prepared to meet that challenge.



This home was saved from destruction because of advanced preparation by the homeowner long before a fire started.

Is your home prepared?

A UC Santa Cruz study has distinguished five distinct historic fire regimes in the Santa Cruz Mountain Region. Prior to human habitation, lightning fires burned the dense build up of vegetation and biomass. With the arrival of humans around 11,000 BP management of vegetation began and three burning types were utilized by different human occupations. These were in place until the 20th century, when vegetation was again disturbed and fire suppression became effective. This present regime is found to be similar to what existed prior to the arrival of humans. A lack of coordinated large scale landscape stewardship has resulted in the excess buildup of understory vegetation and overly dense forests This, coupled with development along the wildland interface is creating conditions that allow for a much greater frequency of catastrophic wildfire.

All the natural factors necessary to support large, intense and uncontrollable fires remain. What's changed is an increased population with an increase of homes in these areas, often with little regard to fire's threat. This has caused an interference with the cycle of periodic fires. Result: greater fire potential to more and more people. Result: catastrophic fires causing huge losses and unmeetable demands on fire fighting resources. Result: a direct threat to your community, your home, your family!

There are things you can do to understand the threat and prepare for wildfire. "Pre" being the key. This guide outlines steps you can take - long before a fire - to prepare your home and family to survive wildfire.

Every step you take in advance reduces risk to you, your family and your home - whether firefighters are available to help protect you or not.

Fire is, and always has been, part of the dynamics of the beautiful area in which we've chosen to live. Fire is an important tool that regulates and balances the forest's populations. But because we now live in

permanent structures in this dynamic ecosystem, we must take it upon ourselves to create balance around our homes and infrastructure, and through advance planning and preparation, we can be ready for catastrophic wildfire.

Evacuate early or stay and defend?

If you live in the Wildland/Urban Interface area, then you are in danger of experiencing a wildfire. During wildfires, evacuations are put in place to protect lives. Your property can be replaced, but your life cannot. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you evacuate when told to do so by authorities.

Brush fire fatalities most commonly occur when people wait to leave their home, or are overtaken by fire. If you live in an area that's at high risk for brush fire, it's important for you to decide now whether you're going to evacuate early or stay and defend your home.

Sheltering in place, or staying to defend your home, requires considerable planning. Fire

agencies cannot make that decision for you. It's up to you to determine whether you are capable of staying and defending your home.

When to leave

Relocate early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to evacuate, don't hesitate!

If you SHOULD evacuate, leave. Don't call 911. It can overload the 911 system.

Remember

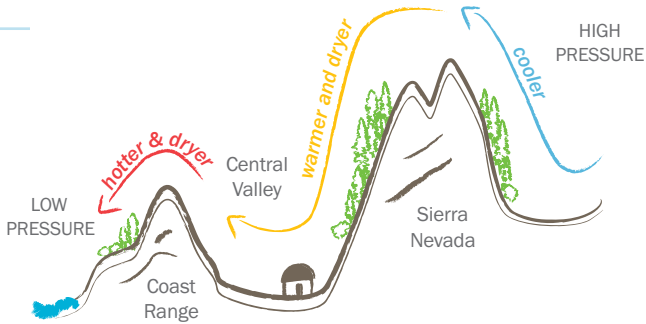
By evacuating early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildfire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job.

In addition, if you choose not to evacuate, and consequently need to be rescued by firefighters or law enforcement officers, you may be putting those professionals in harm's way.

how fast is

WILDFIRE?

The speed of spread and flame length increases greatly during seasonal dry and high winds like "Diablo Winds."



Is there anything we can do?
YES! Be Prepared.

The keys to preparing for and surviving wildfire are:

- Defensible HOMES
- Defensible SPACE
- EVACUATION Planning

Firebrands

Firebrands and embers are burning materials produced by wildfire which are lifted high into the air and carried beyond the fire front. They are one of the major causes of homes burned due to wildfire. Typical firebrand and ember materials include pieces of burning vegetation and, if houses are involved, wood shake shingles. Depending on wind speed and size of materials, firebrands and embers can be carried more than one mile ahead of the fire front. A shower of thousands of firebrands and embers can be produced during a major wildfire event. If these firebrands and embers land in areas with easily ignited fuels – including wood roofs, wood plies, wood mulch – numerous spot fires can start. Homes located blocks away from the main fire front can be threatened.

To the right are three examples of vegetation common to our region with computer-generated estimates of how each would burn under common fire weather conditions. Predictions are based on a 20 MPH wind and a 20% uphill slope. Fuel moisture content is based on normal weather for August in our area.

Grassfire

Speed
4 miles per hour
Area
2.5 acres per minute =
(6 football fields per minute)
Fire size in 6 minutes
27 acres
Flame length
8 ft.



Grass and Sagebrush fire

Speed
1.7 miles per hour
Area
4/5 acre per minute =
(1.1 football fields per minute)
Fire size in 6 minutes
5 acres
Flame length
12 ft.



Tall Chaparral Fire

Speed
8.3 miles per hour
Area
6 acres per minute =
(8 football fields per minute)
Fire size in 6 minutes
36 acres
Flame length
47 ft.



The Wildfire Environment

Today, researchers are studying the fire environment in great detail. They're gaining knowledge and understanding about the complex inter-relationships between humans and nature.

Fire experts have long-recognized three basic components: weather, fuel and terrain (things that burn).

Together, these three items affect the likelihood of fire starting, how fast it moves, its power and difficulty to control.

Weather

Dry, hot and windy weather increases the likelihood of a major wildfire.

These conditions:

- Make ignition easier
- Help fuels burn more rapidly
- Increase fire intensity

High windspeeds, in particular, can transform a small, easily controlled fire into a catastrophic event.

Fuel

Fuel is required for any fire to burn. In a wildfire, fuels are usually living vegetation (trees, shrubs, brush, grass) and dead plant materials (dead trees, dried grass, fallen branches, etc.) Homes, when in the path of wildfire, can become fuel. The quantity, size,

moisture content, arrangement and other fuel characteristics influence the ease of ignition, rate of fire spread, length of flames and other fire behavior.

Terrain

Of all types of topographic features, steepness of slope is among the most influential on fire behavior. The steeper the slope, the faster a fire will spread. Other important factors are:

- Aspect – south and southwest slopes usually have more fires
- Chimneys – steep narrow drainage. A topographic feature having three walls that form a steep, narrow shoot. Chimneys can act as an air funnel and during wildfire events can create rapid wildfire spread.

Other Factors:

Human Environment

As people move into wildfire country, the human-built environment becomes important in predicting loss of life and property. Examples of increased risk to people living with the threat of wildfire:

- Combustible construction, especially roofs
- Narrow roads, limited access
- Lack of fire-safe landscaping
- Inadequate water supply
- Poorly planned subdivisions

Environmental Warning

Landowners who have received notice from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the occurrence of rare, threatened, or endangered species on their property in areas subject to fuel break clearance must notify both agencies in writing at least 10 days prior to vegetation clearing. The agencies will have up to 10 days following such notification to (1) Determine whether the proposed clearing complies with State and/or Federal endangered species requirements and, (2) To suggest voluntary, alternative abatement measures if feasible and warranted. Failure of the agencies to respond within 10 days will allow the landowner to proceed with abatement.

Cut all grass and weeds to approximately two inches in height on flat parcels or parcels with a slope gradient up to 25%; remove all cut grass and weeds. Remove all tumbleweeds, rubbish, litter and combustible debris from property. Do not conduct any grading or discing on your property before checking what permits may be required. To verify, call County of Santa Cruz Planning Department at **831-454-2580** or the planning department for the city where you are located.

THE WILDFIRE EQUATION

Fire is part of our environment. Our brush-covered hills, canyons and forests were burning periodically long before homes were built here.

+

People are living in this fire environment. Many homes are built and landscaped with no planning for wildfire, and they're often on narrow roads.

+

A growing population means fires are more likely to happen – with devastating results.

+

Today's wildfires can burn fast... and seasonal hot, dry winds drive fires even faster, making them impossible to control.

=

DISASTER

- Deaths and serious injuries
- Natural resources & wildlife destroyed
- Homes and treasures within lost

"Should I Stay or Should I Go" Quiz:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you physically fit to fight spot fires in and around your home for up to 10 hours or more? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have the necessary resources and equipment to effectively fight a fire? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are you and your family members mentally, physically and emotionally able to cope with the intense smoke, heat, stress and noise of a wildfire while defending your home? | <input type="checkbox"/> Does your home have defensible space of at least 100 ft. and is it cleared of flammable materials and vegetation? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can you protect your home while also caring for members of your family, pets, etc? | <input type="checkbox"/> Is your home constructed of ignition resistant materials? |

If you answered "No" to any of these questions, then plan to evacuate early.

create a defensible HOME

Things you can do to better protect your family and home from wild fire.

Does your home have a deck or an exterior staircase?

A combustible fence or gate attached to a structure is a threat if it catches on fire, and can act as a wick, bringing fire to the house.

For more information regarding combustible decks, fences, and man-made fuels, please refer to:

ucanr.edu/sites/fire/Prepare/Building/

In a wildfire, fire fighting forces are stretched to the limit. You can design or modify your home to resist wildfire – or it can be totally unprepared and indefensible. A defensible home has a far better chance of survival – whether or not firefighters can get to it in time! The manner in which a house is designed, location where it is built, materials used in its construction, and fire department access, all influence survivability during a wildfire.

Roof

- Install a non-combustible roof that meets the classification requirements of your community. Check with your building department or fire marshal.
- Review roof venting and replace old style vents (screening only) with vents that resist intrusion of firebrands and embers.
- Cover your chimney and stovepipe with an approved spark arrestor.
- Remove dead trees and vine branches overhanging your roof.
- Remove any tree branches within 10 ft. of your chimney.
- Clean all dead leaves, needles and other combustible waste from your roof and rain gutters.

Construction

- If you can, build your home away from ridge tops, canyons and areas between high points on a ridge.
- Build your home at least 30 ft. from your property line.
- Use non-combustible materials for the exterior surfaces of your home.

- Enclose the underside of eaves, balconies, above-ground decks and other projections with ignition-resistant material.
- Relocate your attic vents from under the eaves to gables or roof areas. Prefabricated attic vents for gable and roof applications are available.
- Install only dual-pane, with one pane being tempered glass and the other annealed glass windows and skylights.

Landscaping

- Contact your local fire department, nursery or university extension for suggestions.

Yard

- Stack woodpiles at least 30 ft. away from all structures, and clear away combustible vegetation within 10 ft. of woodpiles.
- Locate LPG or propane tanks at least 10 ft. from any structure, and surround them with at least 10 ft. clearance from vegetation.
- Remove all stacks of construction materials, pine needles, leaves and other debris from your yard.

- Contact your local fire department to find out if open-burning is allowed in your area.
- Keep all combustible mulch at 1-5 ft. from the foundation.

Emergency water supply

Maintain an emergency water supply that meets fire department standards through one of the following:

- Common water/hydrant system.
- Cooperative emergency storage tank with neighbors.
- Santa Cruz County requires a minimum of 10,000 gallons of water storage and a fire department hydrant to access the water for all new residential, non-residential and building additions of more than 500 square feet.
- Clearly mark all emergency water sources with blue reflective tape and notify your local fire department of their existence.
- Create easy firefighter access to your closest emergency water source.
- If your water comes from a well, consider an emergency generator to operate the pump during a power failure or store water in a tank higher than the house to allow gravity flow.



These newer homes in wildfire country are utilizing ignition-resistant materials, non-combustible roofs, “fire-safe” landscaping, residential fire sprinklers, good access, water supply and a defensible space.



This home followed smart landscaping rules; however, a wheelbarrow left too close to the home caught on fire, which then scorched the exterior of the home. When preparing for wildfire, make sure all flammable materials are stored at a safe distance from the home.



Access

- Identify at least two roads or access routes out from your neighborhood if possible.
- Where feasible, modify roads to allow for two-way traffic or add turnouts.
- Design road width, grade, curves and vertical clearance, to allow large emergency vehicles. Check with your local fire marshal.
- Construct driveways to allow large emergency equipment to reach your home.
- Design bridges to carry heavy emergency vehicles, including bulldozers carried on large trucks.
- Post road signs and addresses made of non-combustible material to show house number, traffic restrictions such as “dead-end,” and weight and height limitations.
- Make sure dead-end roads and long driveways have turnaround areas wide enough for emergency vehicles. Construct turnouts along one-way roads.
- Make sure the address numbers on your home are reflective or contrast with the background, and are large enough to be clearly seen from the street and in low-visibility smokey conditions. If needed, provide a second set of numbers.
- Clear combustible vegetation at least 10-30 ft. from roads and driveways.
- Cut back overhanging tree branches above roads. Fire trucks need a minimum 14 ft. vertical clearance.
- Construct “natural” fire barriers such as greenbelts, parks, golf courses, irrigated groves and athletic fields.

Outside

- Designate one emergency meeting place outside the home, and one outside your neighborhood. See Design a Plan on page 14 for more information.
- Practice emergency exit drills regularly.
- Make sure electric service lines, fuse and breaker panels are installed and maintained as prescribed by the electrical code.
- Contact qualified service personnel to perform electrical maintenance and repairs.

Other

- Check your homeowners insurance annually to ensure you are adequately covered. Know the going rate of construction costs to rebuild in your area so that you are prepared for the unfortunate event of losing your home or other structures.

THE REALITY OF WILDFIRE

“...We must all keep in mind that wildfire is a dangerous and unpredictable problem, and there is no sure way to protect a home under every situation. What we can do is take full advantage of every opportunity available in the hope that it will be enough to save a home.”

– Maureen Gilmer, author,
California Wildfire Landscaping

create a defensible

SPACE

Steps you can take to defend your property against the spread of wild fire.

The Three R's of Defensible Space

Removal: Eliminate entire plants, particularly trees and shrubs from the zone. Examples: cutting down a dead tree or cutting out a flammable shrub.

Reduction: Remove plant parts such as branches or leaves. Examples: pruning dead wood from a shrub, removing low branches and mowing dried grass.

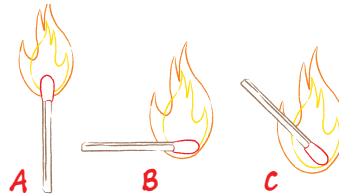
Replacement: Substitute more hazardous vegetation with less flammable plants.

Examples: removal of a dense stand of flammable shrubs and planting an irrigated, well-maintained flower bed.

How slopes fuel fires

The diagram below provides an idea of how fire behaves on sloping ground.

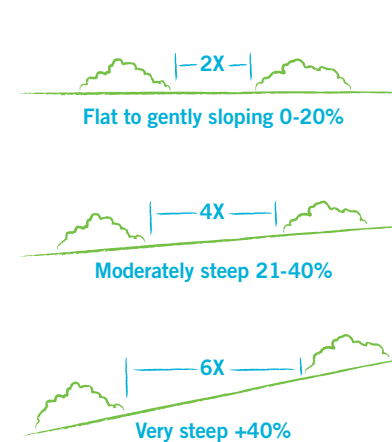
- A** A match held in the upright position does not burn down rapidly.
- B** A match held at a horizontal angle would increase the speed of the flame. The match shown here might represent vegetation burning on a flat to gently sloping area.
- C** This match represents a fire moving rapidly up a steep slope. In this case, as in all slopes, canyons and chimneys, flames preheat vegetation and structures ahead of it, moving the fire along at an alarming rate.



Flame length is the distance measured from the average flame tip to the middle of the flaming zone at the base of the fire. It is measured on a slant when the flames are tilted due to effects of wind and slope. Flame length is an indicator of fireline intensity.

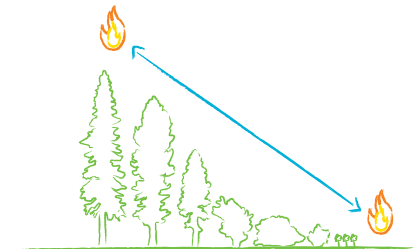
Reducing the "fuel"

The first goal in creating a defensible space is to selectively thin plants, then prune to reduce the fuel volume of the plants that remain. Sometimes wildland plants and even landscaping can grow as an uninterrupted layer of vegetation as opposed to being patchy or widely spread individual plants. The more continuous and dense the vegetation, the greater the wildfire threat. If this situation is present within your recommended defensible space area, you should "break-it-up" by providing for separation between plants or small groups of plants. Cut or clear dry vegetation in cooler, earlier hours, not in the heat of the day. **Remember, if it's too hot outside for you to be working, it's too hot to be using equipment for thinning brush.**

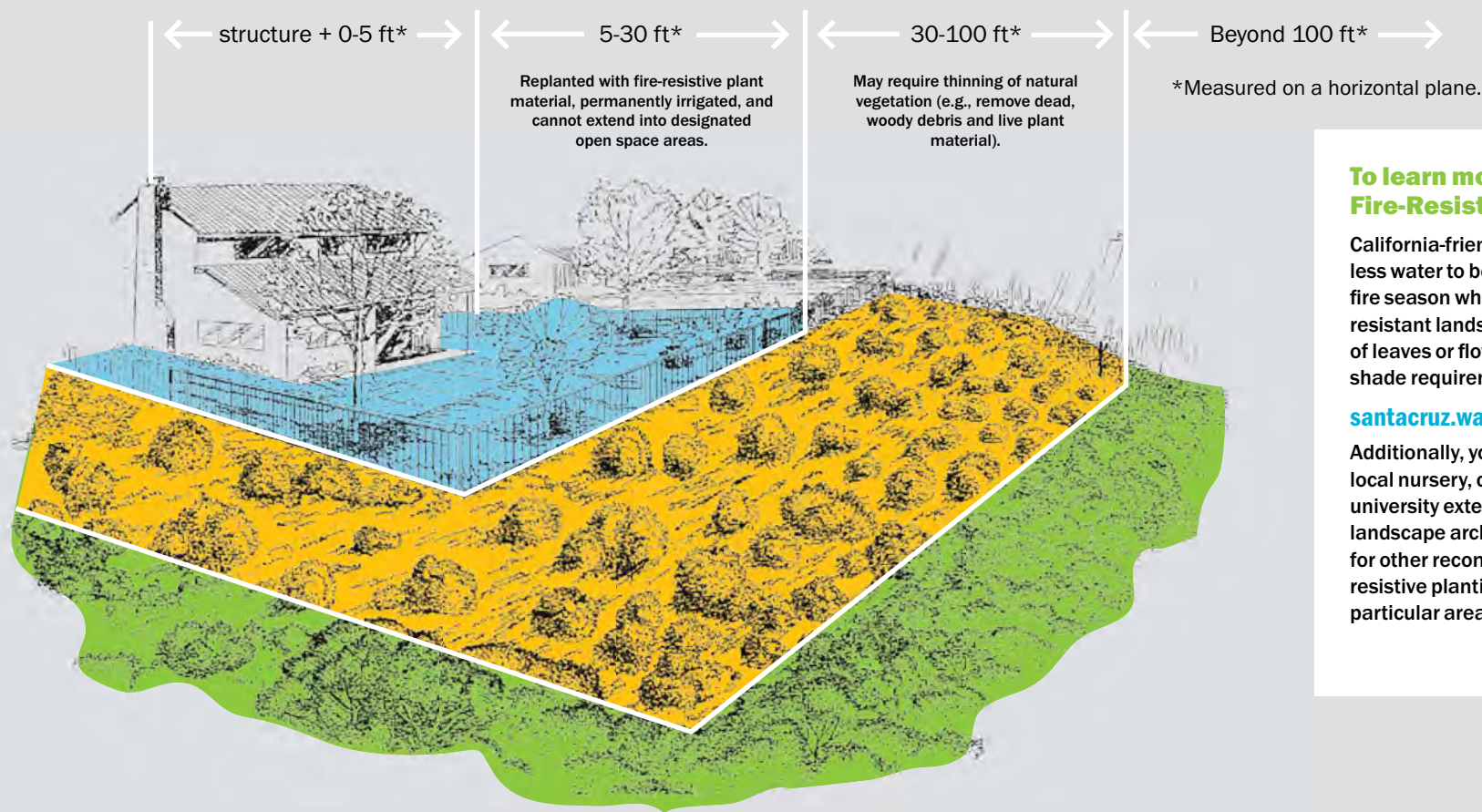


Ladder and wick fuels

Vegetation is often present at varying heights, similar to rungs on a ladder. Under these conditions, flames from fuels burning at ground level can be carried to shrubs, which can ignite still higher fuels like tree branches. Example of ladder fuels: wood fences that attach to your home, wood piles or storage of combustible materials next to your house, combustible ground cover, wood mulch. The ladder fuel problem can be corrected by providing a separation between the vegetation layers. Within the defensible space area, a vertical separation of three times the height of the lower fuel layer is recommended.



Maintaining zoned fire-resistant landscaping helps protect your home from wild fire



To learn more about Fire-Resistive Plants

California-friendly plants require less water to be kept "green" during fire season which equals a more fire resistant landscape. Search by color of leaves or flowers, height, sun/shade requirements, soil type

santacruz.watersavingplants.com

Additionally, you can contact your local nursery, conservation district, university extension office, or landscape architect or contractor for other recommendations on fire-resistant planting options for your particular area.

ZONE 0

Ember Resistant Zone 0-5 ft. from structures including decks

In the first five feet surrounding structures and decks avoid combustible materials including mulch, woodpiles, woody plants, trellises, or other stored items that could easily catch fire. This is a great zone for hardscaped walkways or other zero-scape features. Also include a six-inch noncombustible zone between the ground and the start of the building's exterior siding.

ZONE 1

Lean, Clean and Green Zone 5-30 ft. from structures and decks or to your property line, whichever is closer.

In this zone, eliminate connectivity between groups of vegetation by increasing the spacing between trees, removing lower branches of trees and shrubs, and creating areas of irrigated and low growing plants. Plants should be properly watered and maintained to remove dead/dry material.

ZONE 2

Reduced and Managed Fuel Zone 30-100 ft. from structures

In this zone, manage extreme fire by decreasing the density of trees, shrubs and vegetation to slow fire movement and reduce flame heights. Proper spacing and pruning is critical to reduce ladder fuels, where fire climbs from ground vegetation into trees tops.

NATIVE VEGETATION

Beyond 100 ft. from structures

In most cases, 100 ft. of zoned fire-resistant landscaping will protect your home, but may not be adequate under all circumstances. Check with environmental regulatory agencies before modifying native vegetation that might include endangered species and habitat.



These hillside homes have visible defensible space, that protected them from a rapidly moving wildfire.

Wood decks and fences

Embers can land on many wood surfaces near or adjacent to structures, then ignite and burn hot enough to ignite eaves, wood siding, and other combustible parts of houses. Wood fences catch on fire, and can ignite the house if they are attached.

- Consider replacing the surfaces and covers of wood decks, porches, and patios with fire-rated deck materials, concrete, or stone.
- Keep combustible materials 30 ft. from the house, including woodpiles, trash, wooden trellises, gas-powered equipment.
- Replace the wood fence or gate attached to the house, with wrought iron, stucco, or plastic fence or gate.

Smart landscaping

Landscaping with wildfire in mind – or “firescaping” – involves plant selection based primarily on the plant’s ability to reduce the wildfire threat. “Fire smart” plants grow slowly and stay small, so they require little pruning. They produce fewer leaves, dead, and dry material, and they keep their moisture content even in dry summer months with minimal irrigation. Choose native or drought tolerant plants that

need less water to stay “green.” Avoid plants that contain oils, resins and waxes that make these plants burn with greater intensity, such as eucalyptus, pines, and junipers. Don’t plant Mexican Fan Palms, as they produce dry fronds that are very flammable and fly through the air when ignited. Don’t plant ornamental grasses, such as Pampas grass, as they are highly flammable and spread into adjacent natural areas. Replace mulch and ground litter with rocks or mineral soil within 5 feet. of the foundation.

Maintaining fire-resistance

A fire-resistant plant can lose this quality altogether if not properly maintained and irrigated. Lack of long-term attention can result in fire-resistant plants loading up with dead twigs, leaves and branches, to grow into monstrous, yet sometimes invisible fuel volumes. Walk the perimeter of your house and prune plants that are under windows or eaves. Remove weeds, and consider putting a minimum of two inches of mulch under plants, in areas that are at least 1-5 ft. from the foundation. Maintain the correct irrigation schedule year-round for the good health of your plants to prevent untimely death or excessive weak growth. Remove dead foliage and twigs from trees

and shrubs, then determine the cause of the dead foliage and treat diseases or pests to restore the plant to good health. If it dies, remove the plant immediately. A dead plant is fuel.

Environmental regulations

Federal and State environmental regulations might, at first, appear to conflict with fire protection planning concepts. Environmental law should not be ignored in preparing for wildfire. Cooperation between environmental regulators, fire agencies and property owners has resulted in an agreement to allow a 100 ft. thinning from existing structures.

In Santa Cruz County there are special considerations in these sensitive habitats. Check with the local planning department for addition measure to take when working in this areas.

Sandhills habitat If you are in Bonny Doon, Ben Lomond, or anywhere in the hills west of Soquel-San Jose Road and the soil looks like beach sand, you could be in sandhills habitat. With a wide variety of protected plants and insects, you should avoid clearing, burying, or trampling the herbs and flowers, avoid soil disturbance, and leave the

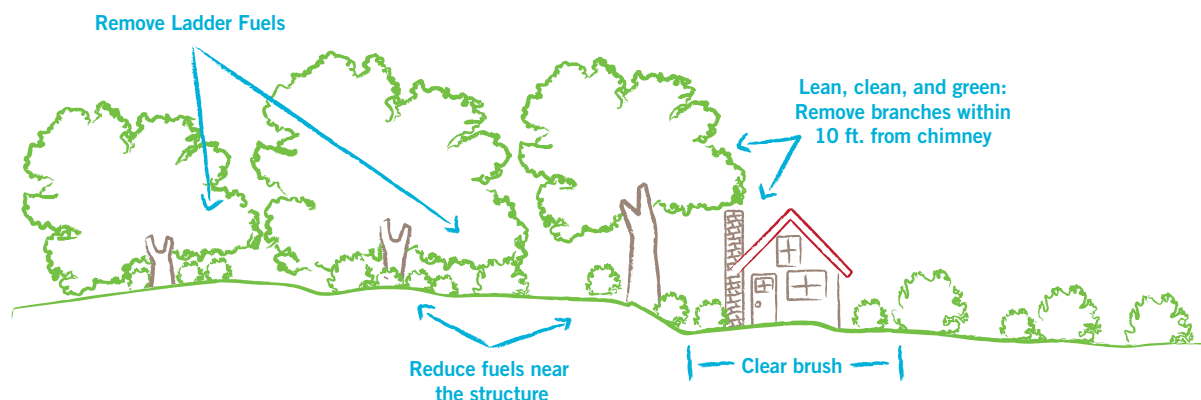
roots of whatever vegetation you remove in place. You should also avoid clearing around dusk during the summer months (May 15 through August 15) to avoid impacts to the local sensitive insects, and if you are clearing manzanita, leave the first few branches if there is no burl at the ground level of the stem.

Santa Cruz Long-toed salamander habitat. If you are within one mile to the ocean side or three miles to the mountain side of Highway 1, between Rio Del Mar and Buena Vista, you are probably in salamander habitat. In this area you should try and keep a low (12-18 inches tall) under story of native vegetation, and separate it from the canopy by limbing up trees 10 to 15 feet. Make sure everything within 30 feet of your home is green and moist, and leave damp logs with plenty of soil contact in place in the area between 30 and 100 feet of your home.

Oak woodland. If most of the trees in your neighborhood are oak trees, you are probably in oak woodland. As in salamander habitat, separate the canopy from the under story by limbing up branches, and retain as much native shrub as you can. To reduce the under story within 100 feet of a structures leave islands of shrubs where it won’t form a fuel ladder to the canopy.

Riparian corridors and wetlands. If your property has a stream, pond or lake on it, leave all the mature vegetation within 100 feet of standing water, 50 feet of a year-round stream, and 20-30 feet of a stream that goes dry regularly.

Create a Fire-Resistive Environment



Firefighters can control about 97% of all wildfires that start. 3% overwhelm even the best-equipped, well-staffed agencies.

That's when your advanced preparation REALLY counts.

design a PLAN

Best of all is the peace-of-mind that comes from planning for wild fire, preparing your home and surroundings, and practicing fire-safe activities.

PLAN

Long before fire threatens, plan your evacuation.

Create a Plan

CalFire has a great website to help.

plan.readyforwildfire.org

As part of your plan, make a list of items you want to take with you during an evacuation.

Here's an example, but you should also prepare your own list.

Important Stuff

- Prescriptions, medications
- Eyeglasses
- Important documents (birth certificates, passports, insurance papers & inventory, personal phone & address books, tax, school & vaccination records, photos)
- Jewelry
- Pet, pet food, leash, carrier
- Child's favorite toy
- External drive or computer backup
- Cash (in the event that ATMs are out of service)
- Cell phone and charger
- Laptop and charger

- Keep your "Important Stuff" list handy.
- Keep sturdy boxes ready for collecting things on your list.
- Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit.

Emergency Supply Kit

When fire threatens, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. Assemble an Emergency Supply Kit that includes items you'll need if you have to evacuate.

Store them in easy-to-carry containers such as back-packs, plastic crates...

- A three-day water supply (1 gallon per person, per day)
- A three-day food supply that won't spoil, and a way to open it
- One change of clothing & shoes per person
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person
- A first aid kit that includes family prescriptions
- Spare eyeglasses
- Emergency tools
- Battery powered radio
- Flashlight
- Plenty of extra batteries
- Extra set of car keys

- Toilet supplies
- Special items for infants, elderly, disabled
- Pet transport carrier and leash
- Pet food for three days
- Sunglasses
- Goggles (for high wind or blowing firebrands or embers)
- Work gloves
- If possible, involve your children in the planning – let them feel part of the process.
- Review and update your "Important Stuff" list & Emergency Supply Kit periodically.
- Learn alternate ways out of your neighborhood, in case the usual way becomes blocked.
- Plan how you'll transport your pet – get a transport cage if necessary.
- If you have large animals, learn how to prepare. Call your local Department of Animal Control or Humane Society.
- Designate a relative or friend as an out-of-area contact through whom family members can relay information. Long distance phone systems often work while local communications are overloaded.
- You may not be home when wildfire threatens. Authorities must close roads for safety and you may not be able to enter. Make arrangements in advance for persons or pets who will be home when you're not.



ACT

When evacuation seems likely, put your plan into action.

Take a deep breath, and remember that you have planned well. Remember, too, that lives always take priority over property.

- Use your list of “Important Stuff.” Collect those items in boxes you can easily carry.
- Face your car outward, so you have the best visibility when you have to leave.
- Load your “Important Stuff” and Emergency Supply Kit into the car.
- Load pets at the last minute when the family leaves.

And if there’s time...

- Be sure all windows and doors are closed.
- Close metal window blinds.
- Cluster lawn furniture and other things that might snag firefighter hoses.
- Leave exterior lights on. It helps firefighters find the house in the smoke.
- Don’t leave garden sprinklers on – they can diminish critical water pressure.
- Lock up the house.
- Remove light curtains and other thin combustibles from windows.

My important things: _____

GO

Get a move on!

- Don’t wait to be told to evacuate. Authorities may not have time to order an evacuation. If you feel threatened, leave on your own initiative.
- Obey orders of law enforcement and fire officers. They understand the risk and are acting on current fire information.
- Drive with your headlights on for visibility.
- Drive calmly and with special attention to fire trucks. They are not as maneuverable as your car.
- Do not block the access roadway for fire trucks.
- If fire overtakes you, you are far safer in the car than out – keep moving if you can see.
- Check with your child’s school about their Student Release Policy. They should have plans to protect children in place or to bus them to safer locations. To avoid mass congestion during evacuation, pick-up should be arranged after the crisis passes.
- DO NOT call 9-1-1 for non-emergencies.
- Do not attempt to re-enter the area until officials allow it.
- Check-in at your nearest designated evacuation center. Law enforcement officials can direct you. Whether you stay there or not, checking in will help others know you’re safe.

Parallel Concepts

FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

Two Ways Out

Your home escape plan should include two ways out of every room – in case the usual way out is blocked by fire. To create a Family Fire Escape Plan online, visit www.burninstitute.org.

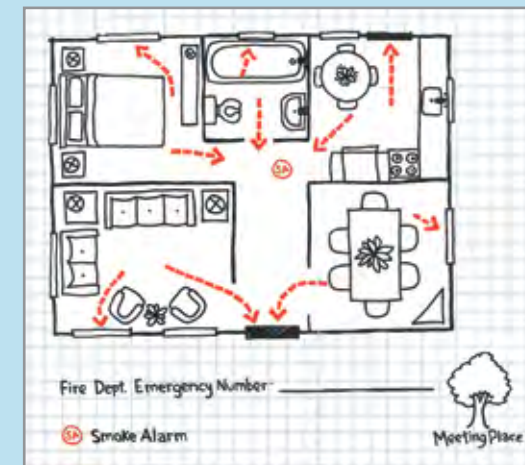
A pre-arranged meeting place...

And just as you should have a place to meet outside your home, to be sure everyone’s out, your evacuation plan should consider alternate routes out of your neighborhood, in case the usual route becomes blocked.

When local phones are disrupted in a disaster, long distance lines are often still functioning. It’s wise to pre-arrange with a distant relative or friend to call them in the event of a local disaster, to let family members know you’re OK.

If you let that distant contact know that your family has evacuated and is safe, other distant family members (who know of the plan in advance) can check in with them too, and learn where you are and that you’re OK. This long-distance communications “family check-in plan” also works in an earthquake. And that Emergency Supply Kit you’ve assembled for wildfire evacuation will also serve well in an earthquake or other disaster.

Best of all is the peace-of-mind that comes from planning for wildfire, preparing your home and surroundings, and practicing fire-safe activities.



FAMILY CHECK-IN PLAN



- Call Aunt Betsy in San Francisco

Work with your NEIGHBORS

Community wildfire risk can be reduced by neighbors working together.



FIREWISE USA[®]
Residents reducing wildfire risks

Become a Firewise USA Recognized Neighborhood. Firewise USA is a national program hosted by the National Fire Protection Association. It is a framework that helps neighbors work together in a community to reduce wildfire risk, through education and collaboration. Local Fire Safe Councils in the South Bay area promote the Firewise USA recognition process as a way for communities in the WUI (Wildland-Urban Interface) to reduce their wildfire risk. This includes education pieces for helping neighbors to work together on defensible space, home hardening, evacuation planning and more.

What are the benefits?

- Community wildfire risk can be reduced by neighbors working together
- Participation is voluntary
- Increases good will with first responders, providing safer access
- Increases community communication, collaboration and emergency preparedness
- Potential consideration by home insurance companies (USAA and Mercury)
- Potential access to grant money

What is the process?

Six steps to becoming Firewise USA recognized for the first year:

1. Potential access to grant money
2. Form a steering committee with a few proactive neighbors
3. Collect neighborhood data for a Community Risk Assessment, and complete the assessment with input from a local Fire Professional.
4. Prepare a Multi-Year Plan, using observations from the Community Risk Assessment and neighborhood priorities

5. Complete one community education event related to wildfire risk reduction
6. Meet the minimum community investment criteria (1 hour or \$25 per household for the year)
7. Create a Firewise USA portal account, complete and submit your application.

How Fire Safe councils help

The Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz County is an all volunteer organization that supports communities interested in the Firewise USA process in these ways:

- Provide a “Why Go Firewise” community presentation to help start the process
- Provide email support and coaching, as time permits
- Online resources for education
- Potential to network with leaders from other Firewise communities

To request assistance, please inquire at info@firesafesantacruzcounty.org or visit www.firesafesantacruz.org for more information.



Organize a community defensible space and chipping day. You can work on common areas such as private roads or help neighbors on their properties. The cost of chipping the cleared materials may be covered by your local Fire Safe Council or Resource Conservation District.



Chipping programs

Chipping is a great alternative to burning or hauling for managing woody vegetation removed during defensible space clearing. Several programs are offered for both individuals and neighborhoods in Santa Cruz County through local Fire Safe Councils and the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County.

Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County
chipping.rcdsantacruz.org

Bonny Doon Fire Save Council
www.bdfsc.org

South Skyline Fire Safe Council
www.southskylinefiresafe.org

Uses for woodchips*

Here are some ideas for using woodchip. Chips should be used on your own property to prevent the spread of diseases, pathogens.

- Mulch
- Livestock or pet bedding
- In raised beds or compost piles
- Cover bare soil to prevent erosion
- Make a walkway
- Control invasive plants
- Play area for kids

* DO NOT use wood chips or any flammable material within a five foot perimeter of your home. Keep depths less than six inches.

Build healthy FORESTS

Restoring our Forests. The forests in Santa Cruz Mountains have significantly changed over the past two centuries, due to historic logging practices, land development, and in large part decades of fire suppression. The lack of natural process in our forest has resulted in excessive fuel buildup and invasive species are out-competing native vegetation. These conditions, coupled with extreme drought conditions, a warming climate, arid site-adapted conifer species displacing hardwoods and other sensitive species, are reducing biodiversity, and altering fire regimes. The result has been damaging to our unique ecosystem and will require environmentally sensitive management to redirect the path of changing climates and ecological conditions impacting our forests and community.

Forest management plans

A forest management plan (FMP) is a road map for achieving specific conservation goals on forested lands. The plan outlines various actions and what the predicted long term results will be. These plans can focus on conservation activities to rebuild forests that are resilient to catastrophic wildfire and better adapted to climate change.

Plans are prepared by Registered Professional Foresters and open to the option of receiving funding to assist with the implementation of plan components.

Your local Resource Conservation District and local partnership office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service can also provide resources for developing and implementing a plan on your property.

Prescribed fire

Using prescribed fire is a cost-effective tool for managing fuel loads on large acreages and can be one of the prescriptions in a forest management plan. Our local State Parks, NGO's and UC Santa Cruz have been using controlled burns to improve habitat and manage fuels. Want to learn more about using prescribed fire on your property?

As part of their vegetation management program, CalFire has a cost-share option for private landowners to complete controlled burns on their own properties. fire.ca.gov

The Central Coast Prescribed Burn Association leads and participates in all types of private land burning from cultural to grasslands to woodlands. calpba.org/centralcoastpba

Regional collaboration

Large public and private landowners, agencies, universities, NGO's, industry and tribal bands are working together to develop countywide priorities for forest health and wildfire resiliency. This is critical at the landscape level to bring in critical state and federal funding to carry out on-the-ground projects.

You can find out more about and support these local groups working towards long-term sustainable solutions reduce catastrophic wildfire at the local level.

Santa Cruz Mountain Stewardship Network scmsn.net

Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz County firesafesantacruz.org

Coastal Regional Prioritization Group, funded through the Coastal Conservancy, is working to identify key projects, understand potential barriers, and develop solutions in partnership.



Your home's survival in a wildfire – and your survival, too – are not a matter of chance...

PREPARE

Fires have always burned through our area as part of the ecological life cycle. Only in the last 100 years have we built homes in wildland areas. By controlling the spread of wildfire, we have actually interfered with the natural fire cycle. Therefore, today's wildfire is often far more intense, unpredictable and life-threatening.

As fire and environmental experts work together to find acceptable ways of returning to the natural fuel-thinning fire cycle, there ARE things you can do today to prepare for the next WILDFIRE.

If you put it off until there's smoke in the air, it's too late!

After the Fire

The impacts of wildfire take a huge toll on our families, our communities, local wildlife and our natural resources. Recovery needs vary depending on your specific circumstances. Even the best preparation isn't always a guarantee. If your property is damaged by fire, there are many resources available to you to aid in recovery. **Call your insurance company before you throw any damaged items away or clean anything up!** Always take pictures of damage right after the fire. If you do not have insurance, contact the Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3) or the emergency services department of the city you live in. Staff will be able to provide information on assistance programs. Below are some other post-fire recovery resources. This is just a partial list, as many agencies and organizations services are deployed on an as-needed basis after an emergency.

Santa Cruz County Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3). In response to the CZU August Lighting Complex Fire, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors created the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3). Their mission is to improve our community's emergency response, elevate our disaster awareness and prepare for increases in extreme weather due to climate change.

www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/OR3.aspx

Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz County. The Fire Safe Council offers up-to-date information during fires and compiles relevant local resources for fire survivors.

firesafesantacruz.org

The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service has compiled a library of literature and videos to help guide property owners in the recovery of your land and the management of runoff from burned structure.

rcdsantacruz.org/post-fire

United Policy Holders is a trustworthy and useful information resource and a respected voice for consumers of all types of insurance in all 50 states and offers disaster recovery help at no charge.

uphelp.org

Contact Information

Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County

820 Bay Ave, Suite 136

Capitola, CA 95010

P: 831.464.2950

E: info@rcdsantacruz.org

www.rcdsantacruz.org

Fire Safe Council of Santa Cruz County

E: info@firesafesantacruz.org

www.firesafesantacruz.org

Design & Layout

Kramer Design **619.544.1052**

www.kramerdesign.com

Resource Conservation District
of Santa Cruz County

Disclaimer: This information will provide a high level of protection to structures built in the wildland/urban interface area, however there is no guarantee or assurance that compliance with the brochure guidelines will prevent damage or destruction of structures by fire in all cases.