

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: Duty PIO
(916) 651-3473 (FIRE)

RELEASE DATE: May 26, 2022

CAL FIRE Reminds Californians to Prepare Their Homes Now for Wildfire Officials Urge Defensible Space and Home Hardening

Sacramento – As California’s weather has already increased fire danger across the State, CAL FIRE is urging Californians to ensure they prepare their homes and property for wildfire. CAL FIRE officials are providing tips to residents to ensure they prepare for wildfire by focusing on [Defensible Space](#) and [Home Hardening retrofits](#).

“Recent wildfires and research have highlighted how the combination of Defensible Space and Home Hardening retrofitting are essential to improve a home’s chance of surviving a wildfire,” said Chief Daniel Berlant, CAL FIRE Deputy Director of Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation. “It is critical that all Californians take preparedness steps now, but with Red Flag Warnings already being issued this year, residents need to ensure they use the right tool at the right time to avoid accidentally sparking a wildfire when working around the house.”

Defensible Space is the buffer created between a building and the grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation. This space is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire and it helps protect a home from catching fire. Proper Defensible Space can also provide firefighters a safe area to defend a home from wildfire. Home Hardening is the effort to retrofit a home by altering or replacing specific construction components with ember and fire ignition building materials.

“This year CAL FIRE is recommending residents especially focus their efforts within the first five feet,” Chief Berlant said. Known as the “Ember-Resistant Zone,” this area extends five feet from buildings, structures, and decks. Science has shown it to be the most important of all the defensible space zones. The “Ember-Resistant Zone” is designed to keep fire or embers from igniting plants, bark, mulch, and combustible materials that can spread the fire to the home.

Here are a few tips to create an Ember-Resistant Zone:

- Use hardscape like gravel, pavers, concrete and other noncombustible materials. No combustible bark or mulch.
- Remove all dead and dying weeds, grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, and vegetative debris.
- Limit plants in this area to low growing, nonwoody, properly watered and maintained plants.
- Limit combustible items (outdoor furniture, planters, etc.) on top of decks.
- Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors attach to the home with noncombustible alternatives.
- Relocate garbage and recycling bins outside this zone, as well as boats, vehicles, and other combustible items.

Homeowners are also recommended to harden their homes using ember and ignition resistant building materials. Upwards of 90 percent of homes destroyed in a wildfire are the result of flying embers. CAL FIRE recently created a [low cost retrofit list](#) with a number of home retrofits that can be completed at relatively minimal cost.

Here are a few tips for Home Hardening:

- Block any spaces between your roof covering and sheathing with noncombustible materials (bird stops).
- Install a noncombustible gutter cover to prevent the accumulation of leaves and debris in the gutter.
- Install ember and flame-resistant vents.
- Caulk or plug gaps greater than 1/8-inch in siding and replace any damaged boards, including those with dry rot.
- Upgrade windows to multi-paned, including a minimum of one pane of tempered glass.

To learn more about how you can be prepared for wildfire, visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org