

# Don't Do the RIGHT Thing the WRONG Way

Community Wildfire Preparedness & Mitigation Webinar Series

Defensible Space - Keeping it Clean in the Heat

---

## **One Less Spark...**

### **One Less Spark. One Less Wildfire.**

Every year wildfires are sparked throughout California, by people doing the RIGHT thing the WRONG way.

CAL FIRE responds to fires started by Californians using equipment the WRONG way every year.





## Lawn Mower





June 22, 2023

Fire sparked by lawn mower.

**2** **Lawn Mower**



July 20, 2022

Grass fire caused by mechanical issues with lawn mower.

3

**Weed Eater**



July 13, 2016

Weed eater ignites fire.

\*Photo courtesy of myMotherLode.com

4

**Lawn Mower**



May 25, 2023

Fire started by mowing dry grass with a riding lawn mower.



**Weed Eater**



**CAL FIRE SLO** @CALFIRE\_SLO · May 16



1



1



2



1,508



**CAL FIRE SLO** @CALFIRE\_SLO · May 16



UPDATE: The cause of the [#RockIC](#) was due to an unmaintained weed eater. We ask you all to please maintain your 100' of defensible space during the cooler time of day. Maintain all equipment prior to using.

May 16, 2023

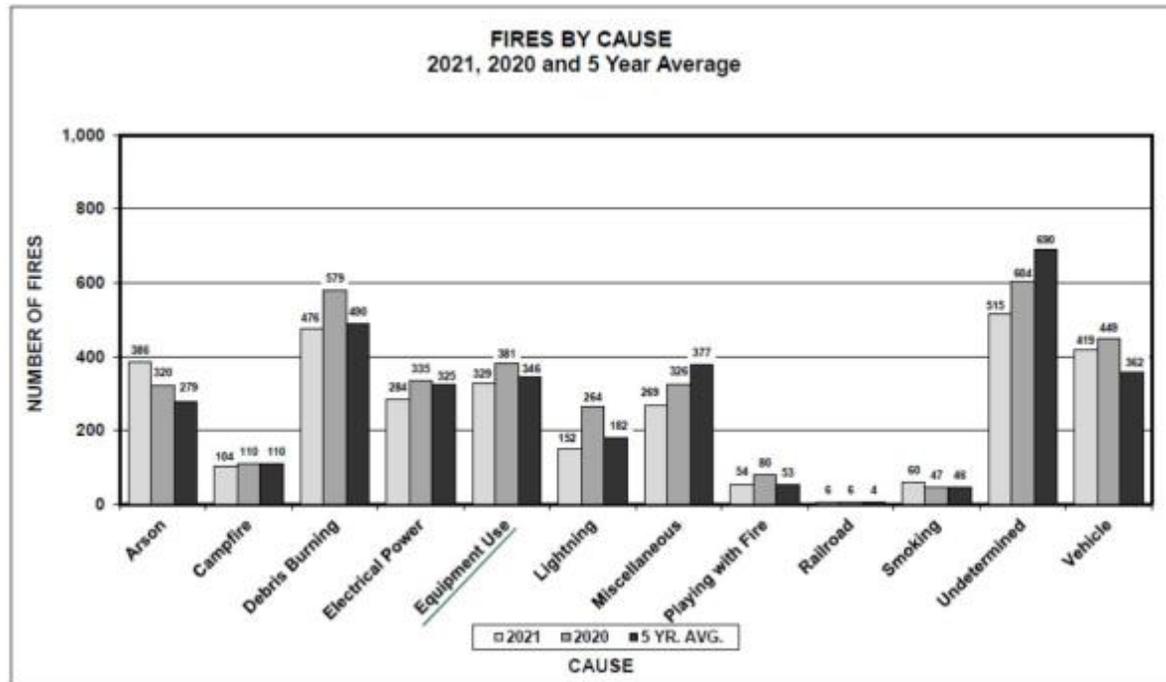
Grass fire caused by an unmaintained weed eater.

## Are You Doing the RIGHT Thing, the WRONG Way?

Knowing the RIGHT way to operate yard equipment can prevent wildfires from sparking on your property.



Whether working to create defensible space around your home, just mowing the lawn, or pulling your dirt bike over to the side of the road, if you live in a wildland area you need to use all equipment responsibly.



Lawn mowers, weed-eaters, chain saws, grinders, welders, tractors, and trimmers can all spark a wildland fire. Do your part, the RIGHT way, to keep your community fire safe.



## Equipment Use

Knowing the RIGHT way to use equipment will ensure you are keeping it clean in the heat.

## The RIGHT Time

Do all yard maintenance that requires a gas or electrical motor before 10 a.m.

Not in the heat of the day, or when the wind is blowing.

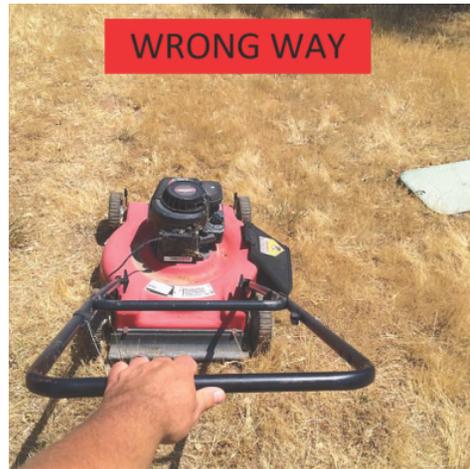


### **The RIGHT Tool**

Lawn mowers are designed to mow lawns. Never use lawn mowers in dry vegetation.

Dry grass getting packed in the mower deck can result in a lawn mower catching fire.

When dry grass builds up in the mower deck and goes in the muffler, it can catch fire, fall out, and set vegetation on fire.

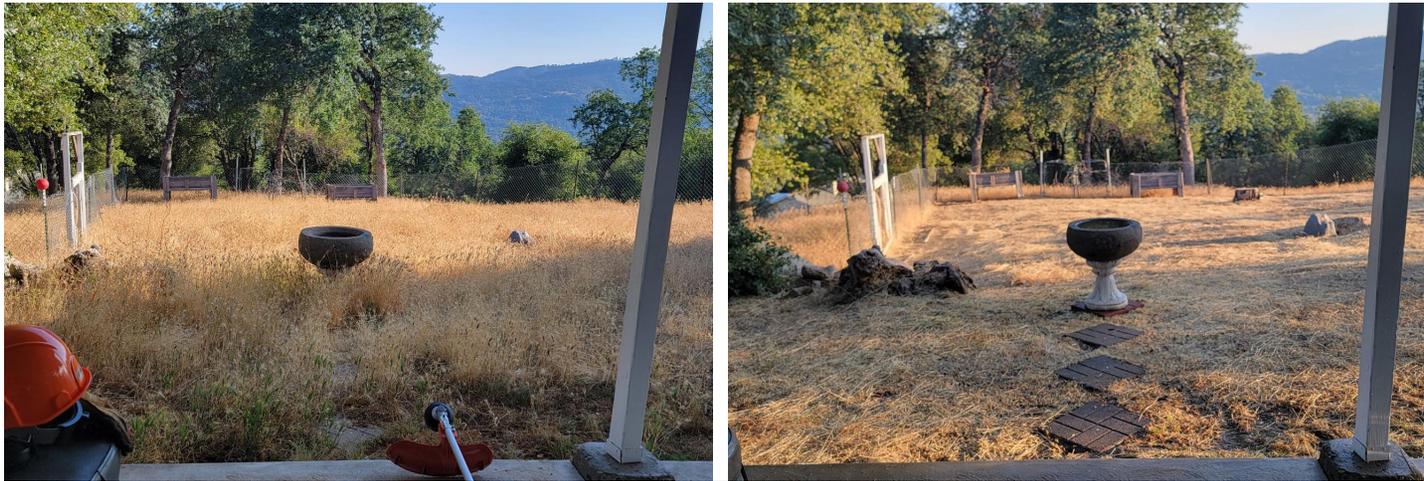


Use a weed eater to cut down dry weeds and grass.

Use string in the trimmer.

Do not use a metal blade attachment.





## The RIGHT Way

### Safety Tips

Remove rocks in the area before you begin operating any equipment. A rock hidden in grass or weeds is enough to start a fire when struck by a metal blade.

Prevent injuries from flying objects such as stones, sticks, and toys by picking up objects prior to starting.



Operators should wear the proper shoes and clothing. Hearing protection and eye protection should be worn.



Give your equipment adequate time to cool down before placing it back into a garage. An hour is generally adequate. Many fires have been witnessed within 10-25 minutes after the mower was parked and shut off.



### Sparks

In wildland areas, a permit may be required for grinding and welding operations, and spark shields may be required on equipment.

Be sure to have 10 feet of clearance to bare soil, and keep a shovel, and a fire extinguisher ready to use.

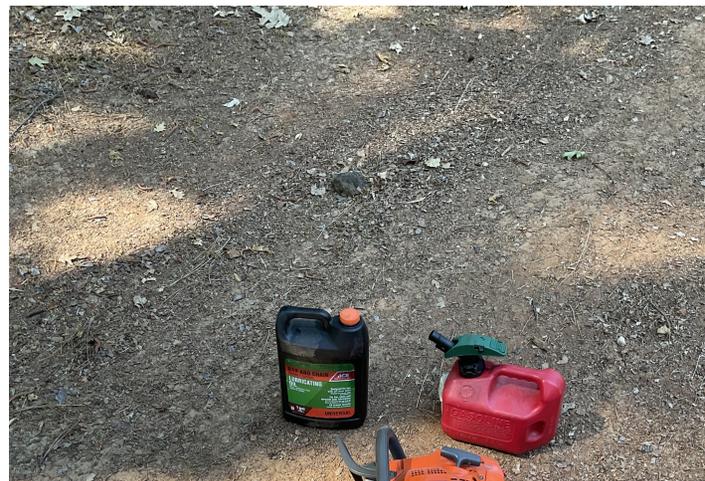
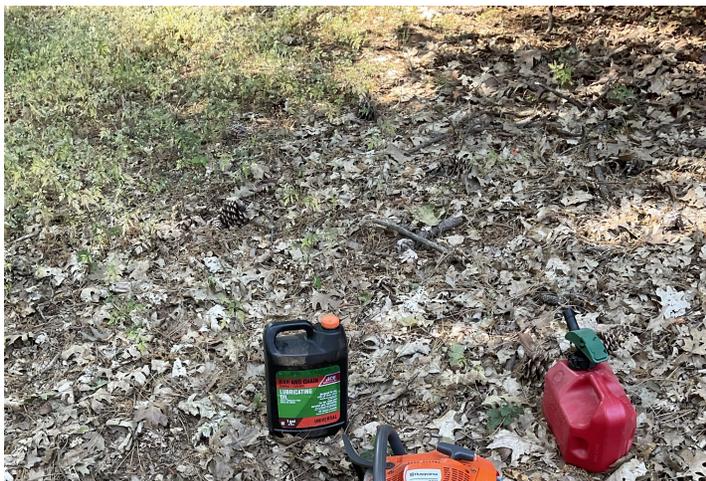


## Refueling

Be sure the engine is off and engine components are cool when fueling. Hot engine components are capable of igniting gasoline vapors produced from refueling.

Hot motors, exhaust pipes, and mufflers can start fires. Never set hot yard equipment down on dry receptive fuels.





### Proper Vehicle Use to Prevent Wildfire

Motorists are responsible for many of the wildfires sparked along our roadways. Nearly all these fire starts could be prevented by following these safety rules:



#### Don't Pull Off into Dry Vegetation.

Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can start fires you won't even see until it's too late!

When operating any type of vehicle, lawn mower, or car, you should not pull into or park in dry vegetation.

If you are having mechanical issues or in a minor vehicle accident, you want to do the RIGHT thing and pull off the roadway but don't do the WRONG thing and pull in dry grass and start a fire.

### **Secure Chains**

Practice safe towing. Dragging chains throws sparks. Use appropriate safety pins and hitch ball to secure chains.



### **No Dragging Parts**

Make sure your vehicle is properly maintained, with nothing dragging on the ground.



### **Check Tire Pressure**

Maintain proper tire pressure. Driving on exposed wheel rims will throw sparks.

### **Carry a fire extinguisher in your vehicle and learn how to use it**

### **Properly Maintain Brakes**

Brakes worn too thin may cause metal to metal contact, which can cause a spark.



## **Equipment Maintenance**

When you don't want to do the RIGHT thing the WRONG way, yard equipment maintenance is also crucial to preventing fires.

Unmaintained equipment can catch fire, which can spread into nearby vegetation.

## Lawn Mower Maintenance

Read owner's manual and follow instruction with use and care of the lawnmower.



Inspect and monitor mower deck and frame surfaces for worn pulley and bearing races. If you notice signs of rubbing as a result of friction, address immediately as this may be a sign of a mechanical issue which could present a fire hazard.

Monitor belts for uneven wear, cracks or missing portions of rubber.

When finished mowing, it is good practice to utilize a leaf blower, compressed air, or other means to clean off combustible grass clippings from the deck and engine compartment, paying special attention to areas around the exhaust system, belts, and pulleys.

Clean your cooling fins every year. Clippings can build up under the cover that sits on top of the engine's cooling fins.

Lawn mowers can overheat or catch fire if the carburetor has a leaky gasket. This leak can make the engine struggle due to air not being allowed to pass through, which can cause the fuel to leak – catching the mower on fire.

Do not remove safety devices from mower.



## **Weed Eaters/Trimmers**

Read the owner's manual and follow the instructions. Keep the weed eater clean and in good working order. Remove grass when it becomes entangled in the head, so it does not overheat.



## Spark Arrestors

In wildland areas, spark arresters are required on all portable gasoline-powered equipment including tractors, harvesters, chainsaws, weed eaters, mowers, motorcycles, and All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).



## Environment

Do the RIGHT thing and protect California's beautiful waterways and lands.

For existing homes, clearance may be an essential part of a fire-safe strategy and must be completed, giving care to avoiding, reducing, or mitigating adverse impacts on sensitive plant and wildlife communities.



North Lake

To protect water quality, do not clear vegetation near waterways to bare soil.



Don't Do the RIGHT Thing the WRONG Way

Vegetation removal can cause soil erosion especially on steep slopes.

Always keep soil disturbance to a minimum.

*California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 1299.03*

To prevent contamination, never refuel near waterways.

Do not spray dangerous herbicides near live waters, shallow water tables, or within riparian areas.



Steps should be taken to minimize the spread of flammable nonnative grasses and weeds and invasive species.

Decontaminate your yard equipment, if you plan on using it at another location.

Recently a family in San Diego received a hefty fine for clearing brush in a nature preserve behind their home.



Los Penasquitos Canyon County Preserve



## Common Dspace Mistakes

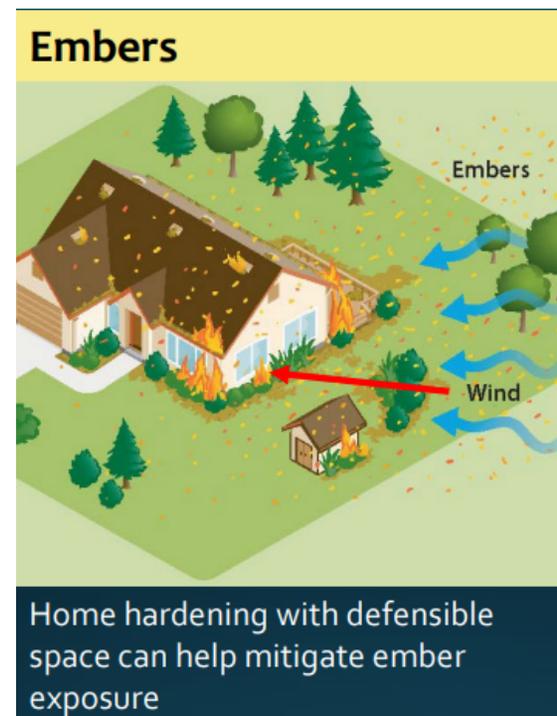
Most people know that maintaining defensible space 100 feet around their home is required if they live in CAL FIRE's response area and it increases their home's chance of surviving a wildfire. Make sure you aren't doing the RIGHT thing, the WRONG way.

### Zone 0

**The first five feet from your home is the most important.** Keeping the area closest to buildings, structures, and decks clear will prevent embers from igniting materials that can spread the fire to your home. Flying embers are responsible for the majority of homes destroyed by wildfires.

- **Use hardscape** like gravel, pavers, or concrete. No combustible bark or mulch.

- **Remove all dead and dying plants, weeds, and debris** (leaves, needles, etc.) from your roof, gutter, deck, porch, stairways, and under any areas of your home.
- **Remove all branches within 10 feet of any chimney or stovepipe outlet.**
- **Limit combustible items** (like outdoor furniture and planters) on top of decks.
- **Relocate firewood and lumber** to Zone 2.
- **Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors** attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.
- **Consider relocating garbage and recycling containers** outside this zone.



## Firewood

It's never a good idea to store firewood next to your home during fire season. CAL FIRE requires that firewood should be stored at least 30 feet away. If you are unable to do so, it must be completely covered in a fire-resistant material. All exposed wood piles must have a minimum of 10 feet of clearance, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions.



DO NOT Store Woodpiles next to your house!

## Clearance Around Outbuildings

Research has shown that if you have an outbuilding close to your home and it catches fire, then it greatly increases the chance of your home catching fire.

Outbuildings require 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet around their exterior.



## Relocating Hazards

You want to do the RIGHT thing and relocate your shed further away from your house, move your firewood, or find an area to keep your landscape debris until you can burn or remove it; just don't do it the WRONG way and relocate hazards so they become a hazard for your neighbor.



## Questions?

For more information, please visit;

- <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/>
- <https://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace>
- <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/>
- [osfm.fire.ca.gov/wildfire-public-education/](https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/wildfire-public-education/)



# Join us for our Next Webinar!

---

- ▶ Join us for our next webinar on August 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM.
  - ▶ What do you need to know about the Ready for Wildfire website?
    - ▶ Reviewing ReadyForWildfire:
      - Layout of the site.
      - Features that are helpful.

