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Will you be prepared for the next wildfire?

**A wildfire awareness guide for safeguarding
your home, possessions, and family.**

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES





WILDFIRE

is a constant concern for our community. Whether naturally occurring or man-made, wildfires pose a serious threat to life and property. As our population expands into the outlying areas of San Diego County, it is imperative that residents are aware of wildfire risks and that they develop a plan to reduce their potential risk for loss.

That is why we are urging all homeowners to incorporate the fire safety measures found in this guide. Following these generally accepted practices may improve your chances of saving your home and family during the next firestorm.

ASSESS

Begin by contacting your local fire department regarding the fire danger levels and local fire codes in your community. Most fire departments will conduct a high-fire hazard inspection for the exterior of your home or business – just call to make a free appointment.

PREPARE

Be sure to register your mobile phones with the AlertSanDiego emergency notification system at [ReadySanDiego.org](https://www.ready.sandiego.gov/). In the event of an emergency in your area, you will be called with instructions and information.

Safeguard and increase your home's value by making fire-safe improvements. Include an area of defensible space, incorporate fire-resistant plants and inspect the exterior for potentially flammable materials.

By taking action now, you will be better prepared for the upcoming fire season.

IN THIS GUIDE

- AlertSanDiego saves lives
- Creating a defensible space on your property
- Landscaping to reduce fire risk
- Fire-resistant plant guide
- Steps to safeguard your home or business
- Important emergency information, and more

Never Be Out Of Touch During An Emergency – Register With AlertSanDiego

AlertSanDiego, San Diego County's regional mass notification system, sends emergency information to your registered mobile phone, VoIP, and email address. It is also TTY/TDD capable.

By registering, you are allowing emergency response personnel to notify you with information and/or actions to take, such as evacuation, that you need to be aware of during an emergency or disaster.

The system utilizes the region's 911 database to contact land-line telephones. You do not have to register your home phone unless it is a VoIP internet service.

If the call is picked up by an answering machine, the system will leave a voice message as time permits. If the telephone is busy or does not answer, the system will redial the number in an attempt to deliver the message after a brief delay.

To register, please visit ReadySanDiego.org and select AlertSanDiego, then follow the instructions. You may register more than one mobile phone associated with your home address. *If you have already registered and you have moved or changed your mobile number, you will need to re-register your new information.*



Your information may be shared with other public safety agencies but will only be used for emergency purposes. Please see the Web site's FAQs for more on this program.

Caution: While the County's mass notification system is considered effective and efficient, you should not wait for or rely exclusively on a mass notification system. If you think you are in danger, you should evacuate immediately.

Use Defensible Space To Improve The Safety Of Your Home

Wildfire can devastate your community, but by creating a fire-safe boundary around your home or business, you may avoid disaster while helping firefighters. It's called defensible space.

Defensible space is typically the 100-foot-radius zone around your building. By keeping your plants and trees trimmed and spaced properly, and planting fire-resistant plants, you'll reduce fire danger to your home as well as the risk of injury to firefighting personnel defending your property.

Maintaining a defensible space does NOT mean total plant clearance. In the illustrations on the following page, you'll see how trimming trees and shrubs, and using proper spacing, will help prevent fires from traveling toward your home.

Plus, regular thinning and irrigation keep plants and trees from overgrowth, drying out and potentially becoming a fire hazard.

For more specific defensible space requirements on your property, consult with your local fire department. In some cases, firefighters may require additional clearance around homes in high-fire risk communities.

Creating defensible space is not just for individual homes, it can also be maintained around entire neighborhoods. Coordinate with neighbors to prune vegetation in common areas between properties and/or check with your homeowners association about their maintenance schedule. The neighborhood will benefit greatly from a planned effort in the event of a wildfire.

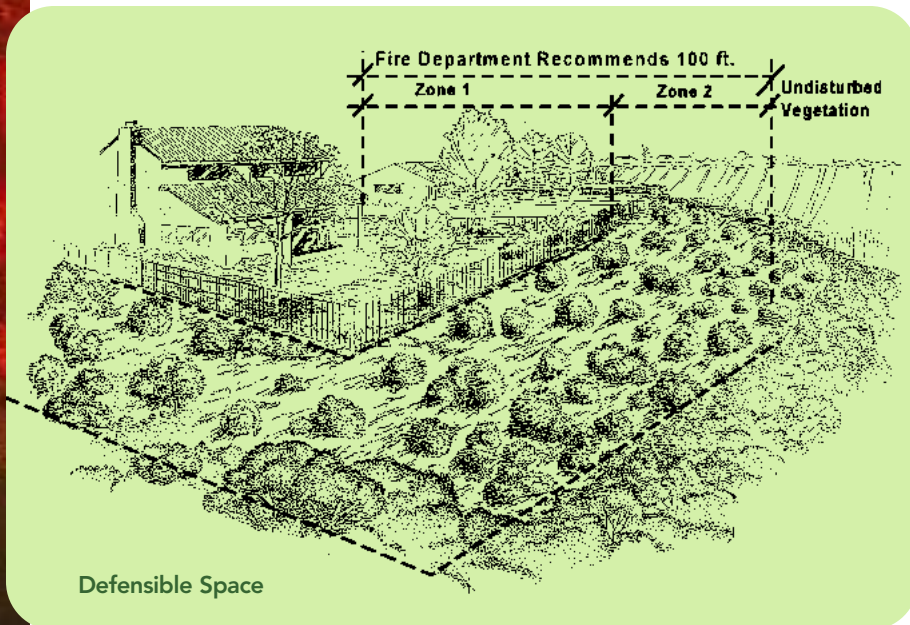


Typically, a 100-foot-zone of defensible space is recommended around buildings. If your property is smaller than 100 feet, then maintain what you can.

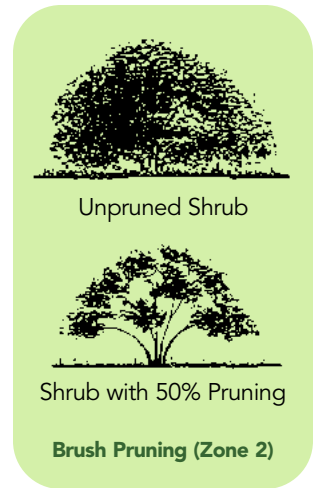
HOW TO CREATE A DEFENSIBLE SPACE

- ✻ Trim back brush and remove any dead or dying trees, plants and grasses, yard clippings, and any flammable items in a 100-foot-radius
- ✻ Prune existing native vegetation to 6 inches above the ground
- ✻ Cut low-hanging tree branches up to 6 feet off the ground and within 10 feet of touching a building, chimney or power line. Low branches may carry a ground fire upwards into the trees
- ✻ Reduce plants alongside the driveway by at least 10 feet on each side. Trim overhead branches to allow at least 13-1/2 feet of vertical clearance within the driveway for emergency and escape vehicle clearance

The first 50 feet (Zone 1) of your 100-foot-radius defensible space should consist of fire-resistant, irrigated landscaping. The second 50 feet (Zone 2) may contain native vegetation but it must be kept trimmed and properly spaced adjacent to other plants, trees or structures.



- ✻ Seniors in the community may have difficulty maintaining their property. Your assistance will not only protect their property, it will help protect your own
- ✻ Plants and trees should be irrigated with deep watering at least once a month for drought-tolerant species and once a week for high water-requiring species
- ✻ Vary the height of plants and give them adequate spacing
- ✻ Avoid planting trees under or near electrical lines because they could contact the lines and ignite
- ✻ Consider using rock mulch in areas where you want to prevent vegetation growth such as under decks or close to combustible materials. Wood chip mulch could ignite
- ✻ Regularly clear leaves and debris from your roof, gutters, decks and yard. An ember landing on these dried materials can easily fuel a fire. After a storm is usually a good time to begin cleaning
- ✻ Wood piles or other flammable materials should be relocated at least 50 feet from your home or business, more than 10 feet from an above-ground propane tank, and away from any flammable vegetation or trees
- ✻ Firewood stacks should not be located uphill from a structure – a burning log could roll downhill and ignite the building
- ✻ Use low-growing plants and remove furnishings or combustible materials under or near windows and glass doors. Even fire-resistant glass can break when exposed to the extreme heat of materials burning nearby



Note: Residents can be fined by their local fire department if they do not comply with defensible space requirements.

Plant Wisely To Reduce The Risk Of Wildfire

All trees and plants will burn if ignited. Some are potentially more volatile because they contain waxes, fats, terpenes, or oils. Fire-prone species have gummy, resinous sap and a strong odor. In fact, much of the native vegetation found in San Diego County is highly flammable.



LAVENDER & COREOPSIS

With fire-prone species, an approaching wildfire may ignite the vegetation from radiant heat alone. So it's a good idea to assess the plants and trees that currently grow in your defensible space to identify highly flammable varieties.

One way to check a plant is to crush a few leaves in your hand. A leaf that does not return to its original shape may have very little moisture content and will burn easily. If your fingers feel sticky or have a strong odor, it's a good indication the plant is flammable. In general, fire-resistant plants and trees have higher moisture content and are often drought-tolerant.

If plants around your yard are dense with leaves and branches so that you cannot see through them, they could become fuel for fire. If you are concerned about a particular plant or tree, take a photograph and bring it to your certified nursery professional for advice.

Although fireproof plants do not exist, some plant species do not burn as readily as others. Examples of fire-resistant trees and plants are provided on the next few pages by their common names. We recommend you inquire with your local nursery expert for information on which trees and plants would grow best in your area based on soil conditions, sun or shade and topography. Be sure to ask about maintenance and plant or tree spacing for your landscaping choices.

Try These Smart Landscaping Choices

TREES:

Any Citrus
Brisbane Box
California Sycamore
Flowering Cherry
Chinese Pistache
Cottonwoods
Maples
Pistachio Nut
Willow
White Poplar
White Alder
Oaks
African Sumac
Flowering Plum
Walnut
Crape Myrtle
Sweet Gum
Mexican Palo Verde
Mexican Red Bird
Pohutukawa
Manzanita
Strawberry Tree
Tulip Tree
King, Guadalupe and Blue Hesper Palms

SHRUBS:

Any Agave
Red Yucca
Any Aonium
California Lilac

California Wild Rose
Mojave, Foothill Yucca
Elderberry
Coyote Bush
Natal Plum
Cape Honeysuckle
Pomegranate
Photinia
Rock Rose



CAPE PLUMBAGO

Scrub Oak
Matilija Poppy
Laurel, Pink-Flowering Sumac
Cape Plumbago
Bush Gerimander
Lemonade Berry
Mock Orange
Bush Morning Glory
Baja Bush, Island Bush Snapdragon
Ocotillo
Golden Yarrow

GROUNDCOVERS:

Trailing Gazania
Any Sedum
Any Echiveria



Blanket Flower
Dwarf Periwinkle
Coast Barrel Cactus
Rosea Ice Plant
Glossy, Purple-Leaf Winter Creeper
Firethorne
Lavender Cotton
Verbena
Common, Coastal Goldfields
Redberry
Snow-In Summer

VINES:

Hall's, Chaparral Honeysuckle
White Potato Vine
Blood-Red Trumpet Vine
Star Jasmine

To learn about more fire-resistant tree and plant species, and to see a listing of plants you should avoid, please visit sdcounty.ca.gov/dplu/fire_resistant.html

PERENNIALS:

Autumn Sage
California Poppy
Lavender
Penstemon
Blue-Eyed, Golden-Eyed Grass
Lily of the Nile
Mexican Evening Primrose
Monkey Flower
Sea Lavender
Seaside Daisy
California, Hoary California, Catalina Fuschia
Wallflower
Yerba Buena
Red-Hot Poker
Coreopsis
Island Coral Bells



Aesthetics need not be a trade-off in designing a fire-resistant landscape. The key is proper selection, placement and maintenance.



Making Your Home Or Business Fire-Resistant

There are many ways to safeguard your structure from wildfire. Some feature common sense approaches, some are more tactically aggressive. For instance, homes and businesses with Class A roofs are less likely to sustain damage. Once you assess your fire risk, you may want to make some or all of the following changes.

OUTDOORS



ROOFS

- ✘ Upgrade your roof to a Class A fire-resistance rating. For details on roofing materials and other ignition-resistant construction requirements, check with your local fire department. If upgrading is not possible, then maintain your roof covering by repairing gaps in the tiles so embers cannot reach the sheathing underneath
- ✘ Box in your roof eaves with a fire-resistant material to prevent any embers from blowing underneath
- ✘ Install bird stops at the ends of barrel-style roof coverings. The stops prevent debris build-up and deter birds from nesting between the roof covering and sheathing
- ✘ Install gutter covers to reduce debris build-up. The covers and gutters will still need maintenance, but not as often

WALLS & CHIMNEYS

- ✘ Replace combustible home siding with fire-resistant materials such as stucco, brick, fiber-cement, or wood products factory-treated with fire retardant. If not possible, then maintain and repair exterior siding, making sure there are no gaps for embers to enter the wall
- ✘ Inspect your home for any signs of moisture rot and replace any affected areas – decaying wood is highly flammable
- ✘ Retrofit your roof, wall, foundation, and vents with 1/4 inch non-combustible metal mesh to resist the intrusion of flames and embers. The mesh will still allow airflow for moisture control
- ✘ Install a spark arrestor on your chimney

DECKS & FENCES

- ✘ For attached decks, consider using fire-resistant materials such as wood factory-treated with fire retardant, concrete, bricks, tiles, or stones, instead of untreated wood or wood/plastic composite boards
- ✘ Sweep debris accumulation from between the gaps of a wood deck. This reduces the build-up of flammable material and ventilates the wood to prevent decay
- ✘ Enclose or screen the underside of your deck to prevent accumulation of flammable debris
- ✘ When selecting lumber for a deck or fence, choose thicker boards at least 1½ inches thick – they do not ignite as easily as thinner boards
- ✘ Avoid using combustible fencing materials within 10 feet of your home



For fire safety, choose thicker boards of fire retardant treated wood for outside structures, decks and fences.

MISCELLANEOUS EXTERIOR

- ✘ Replace windows with tempered glass dual pane windows. The outer pane acts as a thermal shield for the inner pane and tempered glass is stronger than regular glass. If window replacement is not possible, replace only the single-pane glass with tempered glass
- ✘ If possible, expand your driveway to 16 feet wide. This will allow a large fire vehicle and a passenger vehicle to pass side by side. Some local fire agencies may require additional width for certain properties or communities
- ✘ Auxiliary structures including patio covers, awnings and trellises should be constructed of non-combustible materials
- ✘ Try to relocate wooden or combustible materials structures at least 50 feet from your home. If building a shed or other structure, consider using fire-resistant materials for the roof and siding
- ✘ Purchase fire-resistant patio furniture

INDOORS

- ✘ Hire a licensed contractor to install a fire sprinkler system indoors. A residential fire sprinkler system will detect and disperse water automatically and extinguish the fire or reduce its intensity until firefighters arrive
- ✘ If you have a fireplace, get a screen (mesh, metal or glass) to prevent burning embers from escaping and starting a fire inside your home
- ✘ Use rust-resistant metal screens to help absorb heat and keep embers from flying in an open or shattered window

The information presented in this brochure is believed to be accurate and of practical value in preparing homes and structures for a wildfire. However, no guarantee can be given that the guidance presented will provide protection.

The County of San Diego, the County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services, The Unified San Diego County Emergency Services Organization, the Unified Disaster Council, and each organization's officers, employees, and agents, assume no legal liability for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, product, or process disclosed herein, or for any injuries or damages arising from any disaster or occurrence giving rise to the use or application of the information, products, or processes described or disclosed herein.

In case of an emergency, dial 9-1-1

For information during a disaster, go to our Web site:
SDCountyEmergency.com or dial 2-1-1

Visit Wildfirezone.org for more wildfire preparedness information

For additional wildfire and other emergency preparedness information, or to download copies of this booklet, go to ReadySanDiego.org



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