

Reduce Wildfire Risk to Your Home, Business

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. – With more than 4 million acres of their state burned in 2020, Californians are painfully aware of their wildfire risk.

Before the next fire comes, though, you can make your home or business less likely to be damaged or destroyed. The key is to reduce the fire’s access to fuel on your property or part of the dwelling itself.

Mitigation specialists typically divide a property into two zones. The first extends from the home out for 30 feet, which CAL FIRE says should be “lean, clean and green.” If you live on a hill it should be extended on the downhill side. No shrubs or landscaping should be within five feet of the house.

Vegetation that has branches growing from the ground level up should be removed. The zone should be kept clear of any dead plant matter. Create a second reduced fuel zone for the next 70 feet. Landscape with fire-resistant plants. Maintain horizontal and vertical spacing between trees. Keep plants watered.

Identify combustible materials outside the house, such as a woodpile (keep 100 feet from the house) or propane tank (keep 15 feet away). Remove piles of flammable construction materials and all dead vegetation. Replace flammable patio furniture with metal furniture.

A porch, balcony, deck or the like with open space underneath is fuel for fire. The risk increases if vegetation grows underneath, the area is used for storage or any other combustible material accumulates.

Eaves trap heat as it travels up a home’s exterior siding; they should be enclosed. Any vent or other opening through which embers could enter should be covered with 1/8-inch or smaller, corrosion-resistant wire mesh.

Roofs should be made of fire-resistant materials. Siding should also be fire-resistant, such as cement shingles or stucco. Windows can allow radiated heat to pass through and ignite combustible materials inside. The larger the pane, the more vulnerable it is to



fire. Dual or triple-pane thermal glass and fire-resistant shutters or drapes are among the ways to reduce this risk. Plastic skylights melt.

Mitigation specialists say these and other measures can dramatically increase a property's resistance to wildfire destruction. Here are additional resources:

CalFire's [Ready for Wildfire](https://www.readyforwildfire.org/) site <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/>

FEMA teamed with Firewise Communities, the Federal Alliance for Safe Housing, and the Institute for Business and Home Safety to create [this fact sheet to help you rebuild after a fire](#).

Find comprehensive information for communities and individuals to mitigate their wildfire risk at www.firewise.org.

The International Code Council® offers wildfire mitigation information at www.iccsafe.org/content/protect-your-home-from-wildfire/

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