



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Wildfire

HOME ASSESSMENT

Checklist

What to know and what you can do to prepare.



What to know:

SLOPE

The slope of the land around your home is a major consideration in assessing wildfire risk. Wildfires burn up a slope faster and more intensely than along flat ground. A steeper slope will result in a faster moving fire, with longer flame lengths.

Homes located mid- or top of a slope (without set back) are generally more vulnerable because of increased flame length and intensity of a fire moving up the slope. Depending on the location of your home, defensible space may need to be increased.

ZONE 1

0-5 ft. around the perimeter

The objective of this zone is to reduce the chance of wind-blown embers from a nearby fire landing near the home, igniting and exposing the home to flames. This zone is closest to the house, so it requires the most careful selection and management of vegetation and other materials.

ZONE 2

5 ft.–30 ft. around the perimeter (or to the property line)

The objective of this zone is to create and maintain a landscape that, if ignited, will not readily transmit fire to the home. Trees and shrubs in this zone should be in well spaced groupings and well maintained. Ladder fuels (i.e., smaller vegetation or shrubs under taller trees) should be avoided to prevent the fire from climbing into the crown or upper portions of trees. If these groupings were to be ignited by wind-blown embers, the resulting fire should not be able to threaten the home by a radiant heat exposure or by flames being able to touch the exterior surfaces of your home.

ZONE 3

30 ft. and beyond to the property line

The objective of vegetation management in this zone is to reduce the energy and speed of the wildfire. Tree and brush spacing should force the fire in the tops of the tree, brush or shrub crowns to drop to the ground. Flame length should decrease.

Mitigation Action or Retrofit

- \$ < \$500
- \$\$ \$500 - \$1,000
- \$\$\$ \$1,000 - \$5,000
- \$\$\$\$ > \$5,000

SLOPE

Is your home located in the middle of a steep slope or at the top of a slope with minimal setback?

- If yes, increase vegetation management in the 5 ft. to 100 ft. zones. Consider installing a noncombustible wall within 15-20 ft. of the downslope side of your home, particularly if you have a deck overhanging the slope.

Does your home have adequate defensible space in each of these three zones?

ZONE 1

0-5 ft. around the perimeter

- Install hard surfaces in the 0 ft. to 5 ft. zone, such as a concrete walkway, or use noncombustible mulch products, such as rock. Keep the lawn well irrigated and use low-growing herbaceous (non-woody) plants. Shrubs and trees, particularly conifers, are not recommended in this zone. Remove dead vegetation and implement a maintenance strategy to keep the area clear of dead plant materials. **\$-\$-\$**

ZONE 2

5 ft.–30 ft. around the perimeter (or to the property line)

- Remove dead plant material and tree branches. Create islands or groupings of vegetation to form a discontinuous path of vegetation to make it difficult for the fire to burn directly to your home. Remove lower tree branches and nearby shrubs, so that a surface fire cannot reach the tree crown. Trees located within this area shall be maintained with a minimum horizontal spacing of 10 ft. between crowns, increasing with slope. Prune limbs and branches to a height of up to 15 ft. (also depending on slope). For small trees, pruning should not exceed one-third of the tree height. **Free - \$\$\$**

ZONE 3

30 ft. and beyond to the property line

- Trees located within this area shall be maintained with a minimum horizontal spacing of 10 ft. between crowns, increasing with slope. Relocate propane tanks larger than 125 gallons (water capacity) at least 30 ft. from your house. Surround liquefied petroleum (LP) tanks with a 10 ft. noncombustible zone. As an alternative, build a noncombustible wall on two or three sides of the tank to protect it. **Free - \$\$\$**

What to know:

TREE BRANCHES OVERHANGING OR WITHIN 10 FEET OF THE ROOF

Branches overhanging your roof will result in more debris accumulation on your roof, in your gutters and near your home.

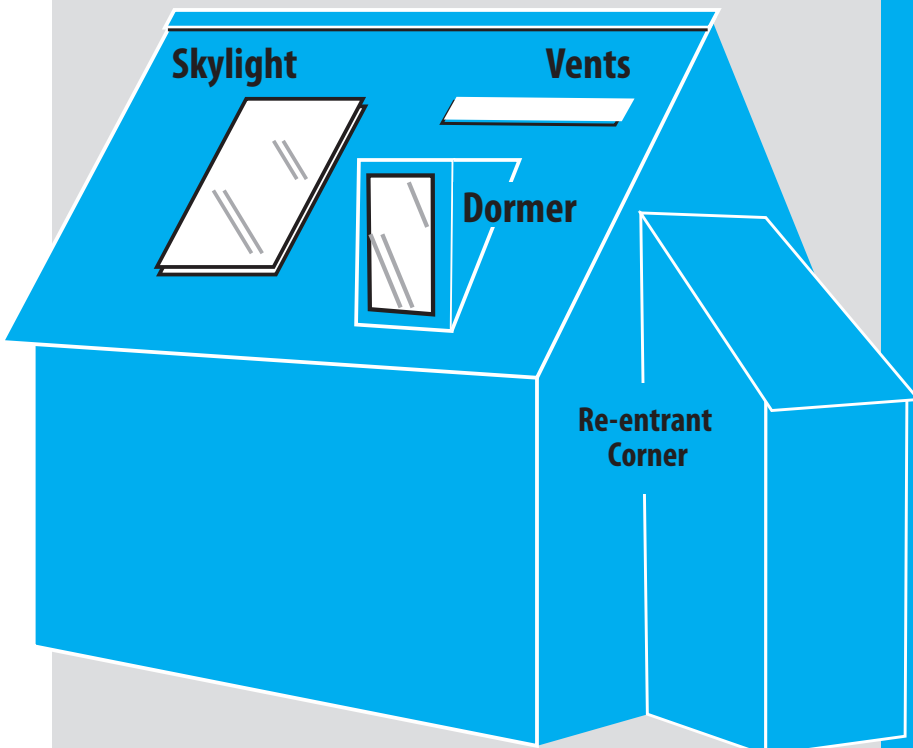
OTHER COMBUSTIBLE ITEMS/STRUCTURES

A fire in close proximity to a liquefied petroleum (LP) tank can result in gas releasing at the pressure relief valve, potentially resulting in a column of flame. Flame impinging on the upper surface of the tank can result in an explosion, particularly when the fuel level is low.

If ignited, other combustible items on your property, such as a tool storage shed or gazebo, could expose your home to radiant heat or flames.

ROOF SLOPE

Roof slope is important because it will affect the amount of debris that accumulates and will also influence the radiant exposure to the roof if near by vegetation or buildings ignite.



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Does your home have a tool shed, detached garage, playset or other structures in the yard?

- Create defensible space around these secondary buildings or move them at least 30 ft. away from your home. If you have a trellis, make sure it's made of a noncombustible material or consider replacing it. Another option is to relocate it away from your home. If you have a playset or swing in the yard, use a noncombustible mulch around it as a surfacing material. Playsets with combustible surfacing materials should be relocated at least 30 ft. from your home. **Free - \$\$**

ROOF COVERING

Do you have a Class A fire-rated roof?

- If not, choose a product rated Class A according to standards from Underwriters Laboratories (UL) when it's time to re-roof. Non-rated products include untreated wood shake or shingles. Other types of products may carry a Class B or C fire rating, which offer less protection against wildfire embers and flames. **\$\$\$\$**

GUTTERS/FLASHING

Are your gutters full of vegetation or other debris?

- If yes and you have a *SIMPLE ROOF DESIGN*, clean out gutters and install a drip edge at the roof edge to protect any exposed roof sheathing or fascia. **Free - \$\$**
- If yes and you have a *COMPLEX ROOF*, clean out gutters and install a drip edge at the roof edge to protect any exposed roof sheathing or fascia. Remove any debris that accumulates at roof-to-wall intersections, for example, near a dormer or a chimney. For added protection, consider replacing combustible siding at any "intersection" location with noncombustible or ignition resistant siding products. Metal step flashing can be installed at the base of combustible siding in lieu of replacing it. If necessary, consult a roofing professional to get help with this. If windows are present, replace with ones that have dual / multi-pane, tempered glass. **Free - \$\$\$**

What to know:

ROOF MATERIAL

Your roof is a large, relatively horizontal surface where debris from trees and other vegetation can accumulate. When a wildfire is threatening your home, wind-blown embers can also land on your roof and ignite this debris, potentially putting your home at risk. Your roof must be able to resist the burning embers from the wildfire and flames from ignited debris. Roof coverings are rated as Class A, B, or C. A Class A fire-rated roof covering offers the best protection.

ROOF DESIGN

Even with a Class A roof, locations where the roof covering meets another material can be vulnerable. Debris can accumulate at these locations, and so can wind-blown embers. It is important to inspect these locations as they are potential “weak links” on your roof (for example, wood shingle siding on a dormer next to a Class A roof covering), or areas where the Class A roof can be by-passed (for example, non-bird stopped tiles at the roof edge).

THROUGH-ROOF VENTS

Through-roof vents are those that penetrate through your roof covering and are one of a few general types that are used to ventilate attic spaces (the other two being gable end and under-eave vents). If wind-blown embers enter the attic area, they can ignite combustible materials that either accumulate there or that are stored there.

SKYLIGHTS

During a wildfire, skylights could be an entry point for wind-blown embers and flames if the glass or plexiglass opening were to fail. Operable skylights would also be vulnerable if left open when a wildfire threatens. Debris accumulation on top of and around skylights will be greater on flat or lower-sloped roofs. Dome-type skylights use an acrylic glass product and flat-type skylights use tempered or other specialized glass. Performance differences between acrylic and glass would make the flat-type skylights less vulnerable to wildfire exposures. All skylights incorporate metal flashing at the base, where it integrates with the roof.

FOUNDATION

There are three basic types of foundations: concrete slab-on-grade, raised floor (i.e., one having a crawl space) and pier (or “post”) and beam (unless a perimeter skirting has been installed, this one will be open underneath). An “open underneath” foundation will be vulnerable if combustible materials or vegetation and debris accumulates or are stored there. The other types of foundations can be vulnerable if the distance from the ground to the siding is much less than 6 in., or, in the case of a crawl space, ember entry occurs through a foundation vent. Ground-to-siding clearance of less than 6 in. can be a vulnerability with combustible siding and an accumulation of debris on the ground, or woody vegetation adjacent to the wall. Untreated wood shingle and vinyl siding are relatively more vulnerable to flame contact and radiant heat exposures that would result from an ember ignition of near-home debris or other combustible items.

Mitigation Action or Retrofit

- \$ < \$500
- \$\$ \$500 - \$1,000
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VENTS

Are your vents in the attic and foundation covered with screening and clear of debris?

- If there is no screening, install 1/8 in. metal mesh screening. **\$-\$**
- If you have a turbine vent, go into the attic to inspect and install screening, if needed. **\$-\$**
- If you have dormer-face vents, replace them with a low-profile vent. **\$-\$**
- If you have ridge vents, they should be rated for high-wind / rain exposure, and specifically should be a Florida Building Code High Velocity Hurricane Zone approved ridge vent, regardless of where you are in the country. **\$-\$**
- Consult your local fire or building department to find out if any vents designed to resist the entry of embers and flames have been approved for use in your area. **Free**

SKYLIGHTS

Do you have a dome-type skylight?

- If yes, consider replacing it with a flat, tempered glass skylight. If the skylight is installed on a steep roof and if vegetation is at the same level, remove and prune vegetation, clear away debris, and trim overhanging limbs. **Free - \$\$**
- Keep skylights closed when a wildfire threatens. **Free**

FOUNDATIONS

Do you have a post-and-beam style foundation?

- If yes, enclose it with a noncombustible material—this process is sometimes called “skirting”. Ventilate enclosed space according to your building code requirements. All raised floor foundation vents should have 1/8 in. metal mesh screening that is in good condition. **\$-\$\$\$**
- Remove combustible materials stored in the crawl space. **Free**

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What to know:

UNDER-EAVE CONSTRUCTION

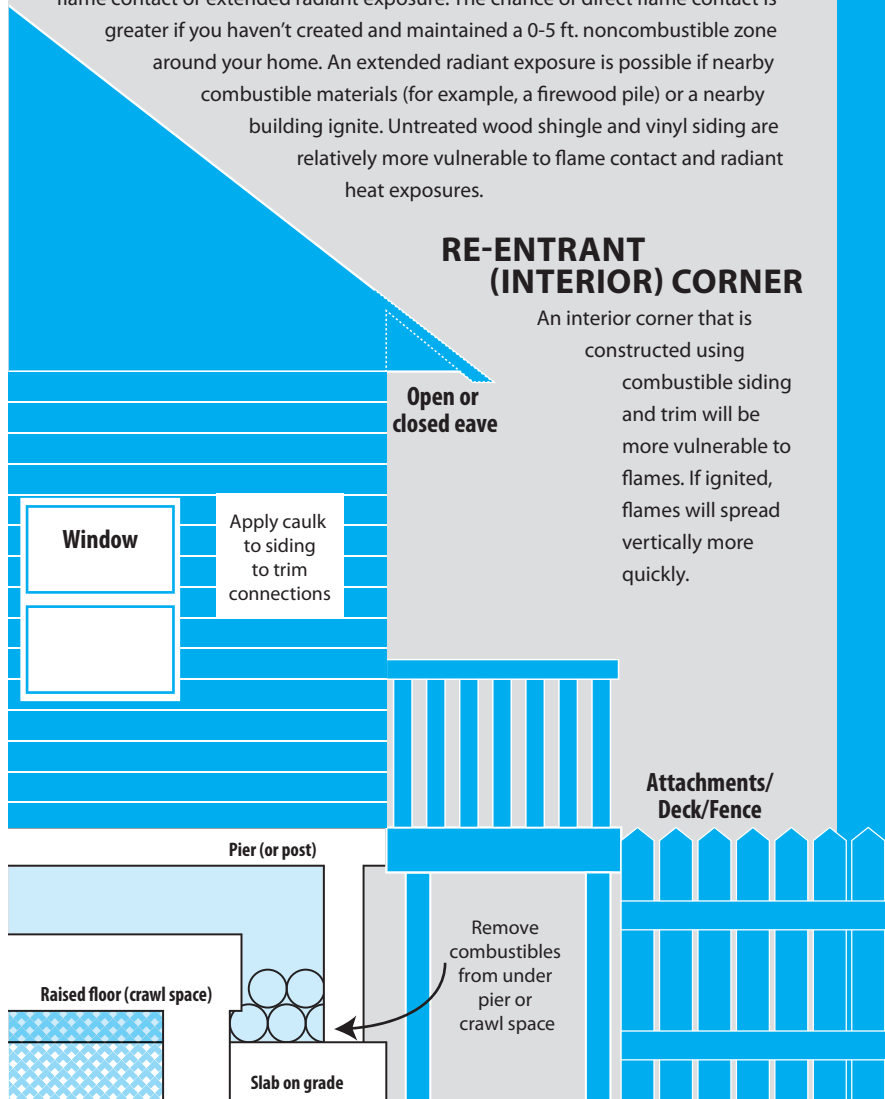
Under-eave construction consists of either “open-eave framing” or is enclosed with a “soffit” material (also called “boxing-in”). Vent openings are often found in this area. Vents in open-eave construction can be vulnerable to the entry of embers, and are more vulnerable to ember entry than vents located in a soffit eave. Open-eave construction can also trap heat if subjected to flames, resulting in more rapid ignition of combustible construction materials and lateral flame spread. Flames reaching the under-eave area would be more likely if combustible vegetation and mulch were included in the 0-5 ft. “near-home” zone and similarly, if combustible siding were used.

EXTERIOR WALL - MATERIAL

Siding is vulnerable when it ignites and flames or embers get into the cavity behind it or if the flames spread vertically, impinging on windows and the eave. With inadequate ground-to-siding clearance, accumulated embers can ignite combustible siding directly. Ignition is more likely if combustible siding is exposed to a direct flame contact or extended radiant exposure. The chance of direct flame contact is greater if you haven't created and maintained a 0-5 ft. noncombustible zone around your home. An extended radiant exposure is possible if nearby combustible materials (for example, a firewood pile) or a nearby building ignite. Untreated wood shingle and vinyl siding are relatively more vulnerable to flame contact and radiant heat exposures.

RE-ENTRANT (INTERIOR) CORNER

An interior corner that is constructed using combustible siding and trim will be more vulnerable to flames. If ignited, flames will spread vertically more quickly.



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- \$ < \$500
- \$\$ \$500 - \$1,000
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FOUNDATIONS (CONT'D)

Do you have foundation vents that are closeable?

- If yes, close them when a wildfire threatens and open them after the threat has passed. **Free**
- Some foundation vents have been designed to resist the entry of embers and flames—check with your local fire or building official to find out if any have been approved for use in your area. **Free**

Do you have vent covers?

- If not, consider using closure devices. There are commercially available options or you can make your own and store in a place where they can be easily retrieved and installed when wildfire threatens. The commercial devices should be deactivated, or home-made covers removed, after the wildfire passes. Some gable end and crawl space vents have been designed to resist the entry of embers and flames—check with your local fire or building official to find out if any have been approved for use in your area. **\$\$**

- Dryer vents and wall-mounted make-up air openings for furnaces should be screened with 1/8 in. corrosion resistant metal mesh. Consider installing a louver-type dryer vent that is closed unless the dryer is running. **\$**

SIDING

Do you have combustible siding?

- If yes, create a 0-5 ft. defensible space zone next your home. Remove any accumulated debris as necessary. If siding extends to grade, consult with contractor to determine if your foundation would allow some siding at the base of the wall to be removed to obtain the 6 in. clearance. Moisture-related degradation and insect damage may be present in some siding products that have been installed such that it extends to grade. **Free - \$\$\$\$**
- Examine your siding for locations where embers could accumulate or lodge. Apply caulk at trim-to-siding locations where it is missing or has failed (**\$**). If you plan to re-side your house, use a noncombustible or ignition resistant material. If you haven't already done so, create a 0-5 ft. noncombustible zone near your home. **\$ - \$\$\$\$**

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What to know:

WALL VENTS AND OPENINGS

Vents located on a vertical wall, including crawl space vents (also called foundation vents), gable end vents, and other openings such as a dryer vent, will be very vulnerable to the entry of wind-blown embers.

WINDOWS

An open window is the most vulnerable window when a wildfire threatens - embers can easily enter the home. Closed windows are vulnerable to radiant heat and direct flame contact exposures. If the frame ignites or melts, the fire may burn into the stud cavity and into the living space of the home. If glass breaks, embers and flame can easily enter the home. Of these, the glass is the most vulnerable component.

GARAGE (ATTACHED OR DETACHED)

Most people store combustible materials in their garage. Garage (vehicle access) doors, particularly on older garages, can have small gaps at the top, sides and bottom that can allow embers to enter. These embers can ignite combustible materials stored in the garage.

DECK

Your decks is a vulnerable part of your home when it ignites. A burning deck will expose the building to radiant heat and flames, potentially igniting combustible siding and breaking glass in windows and doors. The materials used to build the deck, combustible materials you store under your deck, vegetation around it and the location of your deck relative to the slope around your house all contribute to how vulnerable your deck will be. Debris that accumulates between deck boards and at deck-to-wall intersections can be ignited by embers. Rotted wood deck boards and structural support members are more easily ignited when they are dry.

FENCES

If ignited, combustible lattice or nominal 1-in. thick slat fences that attach directly to your home or business can allow the fire to burn directly to it. This would defeat any defensible space work you have done in the area next to it.

Mitigation Action or Retrofit

\$ < \$500
\$\$ \$500 - \$1,000
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\$\$\$\$ > \$5,000

SIDING (CONT'D)

- If you plan to re-side your house, use a noncombustible or ignition resistant material for the siding and corner trim. If you haven't already done so, create a 0-5 ft. noncombustible zone in this area. **\$\$\$\$**

EAVES

Do you have open-eave framing?

- If yes, consider converting open-eave framing to a boxed-in soffit-eave design. Venting in the soffit material (and between the soffit and attic space) must be maintained. If you haven't already done so, create a 0-5 ft. noncombustible zone next your home or business. **\$\$\$**

Do you have vents in the eaves?

- If yes, all vents should be covered with 1/8 in. mesh metal screening. If an open-eave construction is maintained: Closure devices for under-eave vents located in the blocking of open-eave framing are commercially available. Consider purchasing these or making them from 1/4-in. plywood or thin sheet metal. Use these devices when a wildfire threatens and remove or open them after the threat has passed. Under-eave vents have been designed to resist the entry of embers and flames—check with your local fire or building official to find out if any have been approved for use in your area. **\$-\$\$\$**

WINDOWS

Do you have single-pane windows?

- If yes, replace single-pane windows with dual or multi-pane windows, preferably ones with tempered glass. Install window screening to improve performance against radiant heat exposures and to minimize the size and number of embers that could enter. Both plastic-clad fiberglass and metal screening will reduce radiant exposure to the glass and protect against ember entry but neither will protect against flames. The fiberglass screen will fail if exposed to flames, thereby allowing embers to enter if the window glass has also failed. If you haven't already done so, create a 0-5 ft. noncombustible zone near your home or business. **\$\$\$\$**

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Mitigation Action or Retrofit

- \$ < \$500
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WINDOWS (CONT'D)

- Install window screening on all windows to improve the performance when exposed to radiant heat and help to keep embers out. The fiberglass screen will fail if exposed to flames, thereby allowing embers to enter if the window glass has broken. If you haven't already done so, create a 0-5 ft. noncombustible zone next your home or business.

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GARAGE

Do you have a garage door?

- If yes, weather seal the perimeter of garage doors.

\$

DECK

Do you have a deck?

- If your deck overhangs a steep slope, be sure your defensible space is sufficient to minimize flames spreading up the hill and reduce flame length to minimize the chance for a flame contact exposure to the underside of the deck. Consider building a noncombustible wall across the slope approximately 15–20 feet from the edge of the deck.

Free - \$\$\$

- Do not store combustible materials under your deck. If you have no other option, installing a noncombustible siding product around the deck perimeter may be an option. Be sure the enclosed space is adequately ventilated to minimize the chance of water-related damage (i.e., fungal decay, fastener corrosion, etc.)

Free - \$\$\$

DECK (CONT'D)

- Most deck boards are combustible, including wood and wood-plastic composites. Solid surface decks, such as those made from lightweight concrete, are usually noncombustible, but are also more expensive. If you live in a wildfire-prone area anywhere in the country, when it's time to replace deck boards, choose a product that complies with the requirements of the California Building Code, as provided in the Office of the State Fire Marshal Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Handbook (http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/strucfireengineer/strucfireengineer_bml.php).

\$\$\$

- Regularly clean out debris from between deck board joints and other areas where it has accumulated. Check the condition of wood deck boards and structural support members—replace or repair rotted members.

Free

- When a wildfire threatens, move combustible deck furniture inside or move as far away from the side of the house as possible. Treat other combustible items, such as a broom, as your furniture and move them inside or far away from the house. Any LP tank for a grill should be moved off the deck and away from the home.

Free

FENCE

Do you have a fence?

- Replace any combustible fencing that attaches directly to your home with a noncombustible section that is at least 5 ft. long. A chain link gate or fence, a wood frame fence with metal mesh infill, or other noncombustible material can be used. If metal wire is used, do not allow climbing vegetation to grow on the fence—this would defeat the purpose of the noncombustible material.

\$-\$\$



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