




CALIFORNIA
FireSafe
COUNCIL

SURVIVING WILDFIRE:

YOUR GUIDE FOR PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY, PROPERTY, AND PETS

Prevent, Prepare, and Act—What to Do Before and During a Wildfire





Wildfire in California is not a matter of “if,” but “when.” But that doesn’t mean you have to live in fear.



At the [California Fire Safe Council](https://www.cafiresafecouncil.org), we help residents and communities learn to live safely with fire. We are here to empower you with knowledge and actionable steps you can take today to:

- Protect your family,
- Protect your home and property,
- And evacuate safely in an emergency.

In this guide, we’ll walk you through the **steps you can take before and during a fire** to prevent loss and promote safety. We recommend downloading this checklist and reviewing it often, so you can see what steps you’ve taken and keep your plan top of mind.

PREVENT

While your home may be susceptible to wildfires, there is a lot you can do to make your property less vulnerable. This includes **cleaning up your yard** so there's less flammable material and making your home fire safe—what we refer to as **hardening your home**—so it's less likely to catch fire.



RESOURCE TIP

Looking for services and products that can help you with your defensible space?

Click [FIRE SAFE VENDOR LIST](#) or scan the QR code below to see providers in your area.



Clean Up Your Yard

The technical term we use to describe a fire-safe yard is “defensible space.” **Defensible space** is the buffer zone between your home and surrounding vegetation and buildings.

Creating defensible space helps slow or stop the spread of fire that would otherwise overtake your property. Practically, this looks like cleaning up brush, removing flammable materials from your yard, and landscaping with fire in mind.

Three zones of defensible space must be addressed to improve your home's chances of surviving wildfires.

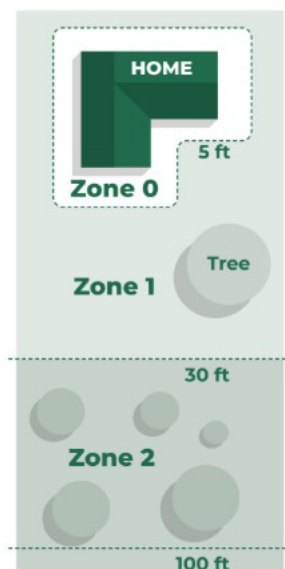


PREVENT

ZONE 0

0–5 Feet from the Home (MOST CRITICAL)

- ☐ Remove all vegetation, including grass, plants, shrubs, fallen leaves and tree needles, weeds, and combustible mulches, including bark and wood chips. You can landscape this area beautifully with stone or gravel.
- ☐ Keep any green plants in this area in 5-gallon pots away from a vent, door, or window.
- ☐ Regularly clear debris from your roof, gutter, deck, porch, stairways, and under any areas of your home.
- ☐ Keep branches cut back to at least 5 feet from the home and 10 feet from chimneys and stovepipe outlets. Remove any dead branches.
- ☐ Replace wood fences in the first 5 feet from the home with fences made of metal or concrete.
- ☐ Avoid storing combustible items near the home (furniture, woodpiles, sheds, etc.).



** Defensible Space
Zones - 0, 1, and 2 are
subject to change,
pending the release of
the Board of Forestry
and Fire Protection's
complete rulemaking
and final regulations.*

ZONE 1

5–30 Feet from the Home

- ☐ Remove dead vegetation, keep grass and brush trimmed, and create space between trees.
- ☐ Trim trees regularly to keep branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees and branches 6 feet from the ground (or 1/3 of the tree height).
- ☐ Make sure shrubs and bushes are well spaced (at least 2x the size of the plant).

ZONE 2

30–100 Feet from the Home

- ☐ Cut or mow the grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- ☐ Create horizontal and vertical space between grass, shrubs, and trees.
- ☐ Remove fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches.
- ☐ Keep 10 feet of clearance around exposed wood piles, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions.
- ☐ Clear areas around outbuildings and propane tanks.
- ☐ Keep 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet around their exterior.
- ☐ If your neighbors are close, talk to them about how you can work together to make sure both homes have defensible space!

PREVENT



Harden Your Home

Home hardening makes your home safer from wildfire when you upgrade to fire-resistant materials and use design elements that make your home less likely to ignite during a wildfire. Some materials are naturally fire-resistant, while others are treated to better withstand flames.

If retrofitting a home for fire safety feels daunting, remember to take it one step at a time. Every step you take makes you that much safer.

Here are the most impactful fire safety projects you can invest in:

- ☐ Use Class A-rated roof coverings, such as asphalt shingles, concrete/clay tile, slate, or metal.
- ☐ Install ember-resistant vents or cover existing vents with 1/8-inch or finer corrosion-resistant metal mesh. Make sure you include the vents in your roof, attic, and under your home.
- ☐ Install fire-resistant siding. Make sure all exterior walls have at least 6 inches of noncombustible siding at the ground level or above decks or stairs (you can use the concrete foundation or add fiber cement siding, brick, stone, stucco, or metal flashing).
- ☐ Keep your gutters clean by covering them, and keep debris off your roof.
- ☐ For decks, stairs, pergolas, and other outdoor living spaces, use noncombustible materials where possible, especially for the first few feet from the home. Don't store anything under your deck, enclose decks that are less than 4 feet from the ground with noncombustible materials, and keep flammable materials off the deck.
- ☐ Install double-paned tempered glass windows and fire-rated skylights.



RESOURCE TIP

Our **FIRE SAFE VENDOR LIST** features several businesses that specialize in ember-resistant vents, as well as other home hardening products to help make your home more fire safe.

Click **FIRE SAFE VENDOR LIST** or scan the QR code below to see all businesses and products.



PREPARE

It's the alert we all hope will never come: a fire in your neighborhood or an evacuation order. But if it does, you want to be prepared. Planning for an evacuation now will help you stay calm and make the best choices when every second counts.



RESOURCE TIP

Remember that air quality might be hazardous during a fire.

Wear an N95 mask and download the EPA's AirNow Mobile App at

[AIRNOW.GOV/AIRNOW-MOBILE-APP](https://airnow.gov/airnow-mobile-app)

to easily track the air quality in your community.

Know How to Get Alerts

Time is of the essence when evacuating from a wildfire. Make sure you are informed with real-time information so you can act quickly if needed.

- ☐ Sign up for emergency alerts in your county at: CALALERTS.ORG/SIGNUP.HTML
- ☐ Turn on your phone's emergency alerts.
- ☐ Pay attention to Red Flag Warnings. This alert means warm temperatures, low humidity, and strong winds are creating extreme fire danger within 24 hours.
- ☐ Understand the different types of evacuation orders you might encounter and what they mean.
 - **Evacuation Order:** Immediate threat to life. This is a lawful order to leave now. The area is lawfully closed to public access.
 - **Evacuation Warning:** Potential threat to life and/or property. Those who require additional time to evacuate, and those with pets and livestock, should leave now.
 - **Shelter in Place:** Go indoors. Shut and lock doors and windows. Prepare to self-sustain until further notice and/or contacted by emergency personnel for additional direction.

PREPARE



Pack a “Go” Bag

A “go” bag includes essential items that will keep you safe and comfortable in an emergency. Keeping this packed and stored in your home means all you have to do is grab and go if an evacuation order is issued. We recommend updating your “go” bag seasonally and having a “go” bag for every member of the family.

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- ☐ Water and nonperishable food
 - ☐ Seasonally appropriate clothes, shoes, and hats
 - ☐ A blanket
 - ☐ A fully stocked first aid kit
 - ☐ N95 masks (in case of low air quality)
 - ☐ A local map
 - ☐ Batteries and portable chargers for phone, computer, etc. (check regularly to make sure chargers still have juice)
 - ☐ A flashlight (and extra batteries)
 - ☐ Copies of important documents
 - ☐ Critical medications
 - ☐ A small amount of cash
 - ☐ For children and babies: formula, diapers, and a comfort item
 - ☐ For older adults: medical equipment, mobility aids
 - ☐ For small pets: food, medicine, and a carrier, kennel, or leash
 - ☐ For large animals: feed, water, and transportation necessities for livestock or other large animals



PREPARE



Plan for Evacuation

In the event of an oncoming fire, you might not be thinking as clearly as you are today. That's why making—and practicing—your evacuation plan ahead of time is so important. It trains your mind to take action when you might not have time to think.

- ☐ Know at least two ways out of your neighborhood. Many states have designated evacuation zones and predetermined evacuation routes. Learn your state and local plans by visiting your state and county emergency management websites.
- ☐ Choose a meeting place for your family outside of your neighborhood and make sure everyone knows where it is.
- ☐ Share your plan with family and neighbors.
- ☐ If you have pets, research and identify pet-friendly shelters or destinations, like a hotel or a friend's home. Microchipping your pet greatly increases the chances of reunification if your pet gets lost during an emergency.
- ☐ If you have large animals or livestock, know the location of large animal and livestock shelters, as well as your method of transporting them. Learn the evacuation routes to the sites.
- ☐ If you receive home care, speak with your case manager or caregiver to see what their plan is in times of emergency and how they can assist with your plan.
- ☐ If you have mobility concerns or are unable to drive, make sure you and your family have identified in advance who will be able to provide transportation. Have their contact information readily available.
- ☐ Occasionally, practice evacuation drills with your family. Practice getting dressed, grabbing your "go" bag, and getting to the car or meeting spot. Time yourself—under 15 minutes is best!



ACT

When a fire breaks out, fast action saves lives. Here are important steps you can take at each stage of an active fire threat.



When a Threat is Imminent

Protecting life is always more important than protecting property. Do not hesitate to leave, even if it means leaving your home in less-than-ideal conditions. Sometimes, though, you will have enough warning to prepare for a potential evacuation. Here are some steps you can take if you do.

PREPARING YOURSELF

- ☐ Park your vehicles in the driveway facing out, and know where your keys are.
- ☐ Ensure vehicle windows are rolled up to prevent embers from entering.
- ☐ Put on protective clothing such as long sleeves and long pants made from natural fibers; sturdy shoes; protective goggles; a wool cap; and an N95 mask.
- ☐ Charge phones and electronics.
- ☐ Collect your go bag and purses/wallets.
- ☐ Gather family members, pets, and anyone who would be evacuating with you (walkie-talkies can be helpful if you are evacuating more than one vehicle).

PREPARING YOUR HOME

- ☐ Close all windows, doors (including garage doors), and skylights.
- ☐ Turn off air conditioners and ceiling fans.
- ☐ Shut the fireplace.
- ☐ Pull furniture, lamps, and flammable curtains away from windows.
- ☐ Fill sinks and tubs with water.
- ☐ Turn on the interior and exterior house lights.
- ☐ Set out fire extinguishers where they are easily visible.
- ☐ Move outdoor door mats, furniture, umbrellas, potted plants, and any other flammable items away from structures.
- ☐ Connect outdoor hoses, fill water buckets and place them outside, and if possible, place metal ladders out to help firefighters.

ACT



When It's Time to Evacuate

When it's go time, every second matters. Stay calm and focus on getting out as quickly as you can—the sooner the better!

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- ☐ Load pets and livestock into carriers.
 - ☐ Put your “go” bags and extra water in your vehicle.
 - ☐ Confirm meeting places and out-of-state contact with your group.
 - ☐ Load family and pets into vehicles.
 - ☐ Do a final head count to make sure you have everyone with you.
 - ☐ Tune the vehicle radio to your local emergency station for evacuation and route information.
 - ☐ Turn your car headlights on and turn on your car's air conditioning (set to recirculate).
 - ☐ Drive slowly and defensively. Stay on paved roads. Proceed downhill and away from the fire whenever possible.



Why Fire is Important

Fire plays an essential role in maintaining soil and ecosystem health—and it's an inevitable part of the climate in California. However, as development increases in fire-prone areas and the climate changes, the potential for destructive wildfires that impact human life is growing.

By educating yourself on fire prevention and safety, you are not only protecting yourself and your loved ones—you are also playing a critical role in making your community more resilient to fire.





LOOKING FOR MORE RESOURCES?

Visit our website at [HTTPS://CAFIRESAFECOUNCIL.ORG/](https://CAFIRESAFECOUNCIL.ORG/), where you can find more detailed guides as well as our [FIRE SAFE VENDOR LIST](#), chock-full of businesses ready to help you with your wildfire preparedness needs.

And, don't forget to be a good neighbor! Pass these resources on to friends and family, check in with neighbors to make sure they have a plan, and be ready to lend a helping hand. Together, we can build a future in which California's most vulnerable communities live safely with wildfire.



Scan here to go to:
CAFIRESAFECOUNCIL.ORG/



About California Fire Safe Council

California Fire Safe Council is a nonprofit organization that educates, empowers, and mobilizes communities throughout California to live safely with wildfire. We do this through outreach and education, mitigation, and community planning. We partner with more than 300 local fire safe councils and provide funding to mission-critical projects to help Californians live safely with fire.

LEARN MORE AT: CAFIRESAFECOUNCIL.ORG



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