



# WILDFIRE PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

## *How to better protect your home and property*

**H**ome and building loss during wildfires occur from one or more of the three basic wildfire exposures: 1) Embers, 2) Radiant heat, and 3) Direct flame contact. Burning embers can travel up to a mile from the fire front and cause the majority of wildfire home ignition.

Property owners and residents can reduce the risk of damage and loss by taking the additional steps listed in this brochure. Fire season length can vary. Maintenance of your home and property should be a year-round. Start with your home and then work your way outwards through the defensible space zone.

## HARDENING AND MAINTAINING YOUR HOME

Many older homes were built before increased building standards in hazardous fire areas were adopted. "Home Hardening" refers to making improvements and upgrades to the most current building standards for fire areas. While some items are very expensive to retrofit, there are items that can be done very simply:

### ***Roofs and Gutters:***

Roofs, even cement and mission style, require maintenance. Roofs settle over a period of time as the lumber dries out. This can cause small gaps to form in the tile spacing and trap debris which can ignite under the tiles. Asphalt shingles can curl or be displaced.

- Inspect your roof to eliminate any areas that can trap debris.
- Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent ember intrusion.
- Clean valleys and gutters regularly.
- Remove all tree branches or vegetation within 3-feet to the side, above, and below the roof or any eave projection from the exterior wall of the structure.
- Consider replacing a non-rated roof with a Class A rated non-combustible roof.



## ***Walls, Siding and Trim Boards***

- Inspect for worn, cracked and peeling paint.
- Eliminate exposed wood.
- Replace cracked or damaged boards.
- Check for excessive spacing in joints between boards and at junctions to walls and roofs. Caulk gaps as necessary.
- Wood and Vinyl siding exposed to excessive radiant heat from a fire can ignite. Consider replacing wood or vinyl siding with a non-combustible siding.
- Provide a minimum 6" non-combustible wall covering at base of any wall where it meets the ground.

## ***Vents and Eaves***

- Regularly inspect vent openings for damage.
- Replace with 1/16" to 1/8" mesh. Do not use fiberglass or plastic material.
- Replace vents located at eaves and cornices with approved baffle style vents to block embers.
- "Box-in" exposed wood underneath eaves using stucco.

## ***Windows and Door Openings***

- Consider replacing windows with multi-pane tempered glass. Steel frames are preferred.
- Install & maintain weather stripping around and under any doors, including the garage door.



## ***Chimney***

- Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with a nonflammable screen.
- Use metal screen material with openings no smaller than 3/8-inch and no larger than 1/2-inch to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

## ***Patio Covers***

- Use heavy timber or ignition-resistant materials. Contact your Building Department for specific requirements in your area.
- Do not attach plastic and fabric sunscreens to the home. Keep them 5-feet away.

## ***Decks***

- Decks within 10 feet of a building should be built with ignition-resistant, noncombustible, or other approved materials.
- Replace decks not built to current building codes.
- Create an ember-resistant zone around and under all decks and make sure that all combustible items are removed from underneath your deck.
- If a deck overhangs a slope, create and maintain increased defensible space downslope from the deck to reduce the chances of flames reaching the underside of the deck.



Home hardening and low cost retrofit list, please visit:

[readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/hardening-your-home](https://readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/hardening-your-home)

# AREA OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

## *Belongings and Other Combustible Materials*

Look for combustible materials within the yard. Remove or relocate them away from the home. Store them inside when not in use or cover them with a fire-resistant cover. This includes yard furniture, trash cans, wood piles, etc. Remove any items next to structures that can trap leaves and debris which can readily ignite during a fire.

## *Landscaping and Defensible Space*

Remember, fire-resistant does not mean fireproof! Even fire-resistant plants will burn if not well maintained. Keep all of your plants healthy with appropriate water, proper pruning and removal of dead material.

- Combustible mulch and wood chips are prohibited within 5 feet of a building (Ventura County Fire Code).
- Remove plants underneath windows.
- Provide a minimum 5–6 foot clearance from roof overhangs above any plants.
- Remove vines and other plants growing on buildings.
- Consider removing any plants and trees that are identified as hazardous or prohibited by VCFD. See our website for more information regarding defensible space, plants, trees and spacing requirements.



## *Trees*

- Provide a minimum 10-foot space between the tree and home.
- Remove any dead branches and areas that can cause dried leaves to accumulate within the tree. This includes removing dried palm fronds.
- Limb trees up from the ground a minimum of 6 feet and provide additional space above plants located underneath trees.



## *Fencing*

Use non-combustible fencing within 5 feet of a home. Remove and space vegetation away from combustible fencing. Wood fencing burning to homes: <https://youtu.be/PoPiC3Ugk94>

## *Access Roads and Driveways*

Trim trees and landscaping overhanging the road or driveway.

- Maintain a minimum 13'-6" vertical clearance and up to a 10-foot horizontal clearance along roads and driveways.
- Provide a Fire Department approved Knox key device for locked gates.

## *Address*

Make sure your address is clearly visible from the street. Use minimum 4 inch high numbers contrasting with the background. Mount on non-combustible surface or post.

## *Water Supply and Fire Hydrants*

- Maintain a minimum 3-foot clearance around all fire hydrants. Make sure the fire hydrant is visible and there is direct access to it. This includes fire department outlets on private water supply tanks.
- If your property is on private water or well water, consider backup power supply for the water pump system.



## Accessory Buildings

Accessory building of any size create a fire hazard for the homes. Plastic and wood sheds are the most hazardous and should be located away from a home. Recommended distance is 30-50 feet.

Accessory buildings within 3 feet of a building shall be noncombustible construction or ignition-resistant construction. (California Building Code).

***For more information regarding protecting your home from wildfire and emergency preparedness, please see the following links:***

**Ventura County Fire Department – [vcfd.org](http://vcfd.org)**  
Information regarding our Ready Set Go and Wildfire Action Plan – [vcreadyssetgo.com](http://vcreadyssetgo.com)

**Fire Hazard Reduction Program – [VCFHRP.org](http://VCFHRP.org)**  
Contains information regarding defensible space, plant spacing, plant reference guide, prohibited plant list, mulch use in the 100' zone.

**[VCFD Firewise USA®](http://VCFD Firewise USA®)** - Learn how Firewise USA® can help residents to work together to prepare their community against wildfire and possibly obtain insurance discounts.

**Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (VCOES) – [vcemergency.org](http://vcemergency.org)**  
Emergency Information Hotline: 805-465-6650

**Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IIBHS): [IBHS-Wildfire Research](http://IBHS-Wildfire Research)**  
**[Wildfire Prepared Home program](http://Wildfire Prepared Home program)**  
2019 Demo & info links – [ibhs.org/wildfire/wildfire-demo-2019](http://ibhs.org/wildfire/wildfire-demo-2019)  
2011 Ember Storm Video – [youtube.com/watch?v=lvbNOPSyys&feature=youtu.be](http://youtube.com/watch?v=lvbNOPSyys&feature=youtu.be)

**University of California Cooperative Extension**  
Fire in California – [ucanr.edu/sites/fire/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/fire/)

**California Building Code (Chapter 7A):** Please refer to your local building department for most current State and local codes regarding building construction in fire severity zones.



## VENTURA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

### Fire Hazard Reduction Program Unit

165 Durley Avenue • Camarillo, CA 93010  
(805) 389-9759

[VCFD.org](http://VCFD.org) • [FHRP@ventura.org](mailto:FHRP@ventura.org)

*For additional information, contact your neighborhood fire station or the FHRP Unit.*

