



Risk Management Services

PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM WILDFIRES AND BRUSH FIRES

Defensible Space

Defensible space is your property's front line defense against wildfire. Creating and maintaining defensible space around your property can dramatically increase the chance of your building surviving a wildfire, and improves the safety of firefighters defending your property. Defensible space guidelines will vary depending on the location, but in general terms, it extends from 75 to 150 feet around a structure. This would include removing all vegetation within 15 feet, thinning out trees and vegetation beyond the 15 foot buffer zone, and keeping weeds and dry grass to less than 6 inches in height. Contact local experts to advise you based on your area and property layout. With recent brush fire seasons being the worst in years, it is more important than ever to create a landscape around your home or business that is less vulnerable to wildfire. One hundred feet of defensible space is required by law (California Fire Code (CFC) 2010 Edition).

Minimum Standards

1. Parcel fronting on a public street or alley shall be abated to the edge of the public street or alley.
(Yes, this is your property and your responsibility).
2. Trees shall be limbed no less than 6 feet from ground level within 30 feet of buildings.
3. Brush and combustible vegetation (excluding landscaping) must be cleared 100 feet around all buildings.
4. Remove the portion of any tree extending within 10 feet of the chimney outlet.
5. Maintain any tree adjacent to or overhanging any building free of dead wood.
6. Remove all debris, leaves, needles, or other dead vegetative growth from roof structures and rain gutters.
7. Remove any/all flammable dead debris from underneath/around all bushes, plants, and/or landscaping structures including stairs, decks, patios, carports, etc.
8. Post address in visible area in numbers not less than 3 inches high, 3/8 inches wide and in a contrasting color. If your address cannot be seen from the roadway and/or if your driveway serves multiple residences, post your address (same specifications above) on a 4 foot post at the driveway entrance so that it is visible from both ways of travel.
9. Maintain driveway access clear 12 feet wide and 15 feet high.

Acceptable Procedures

The following list outlines the only acceptable procedures allowed for the abatement of fire hazards created by combustible weeds and/or debris:

CUTTING: Combustible weeds and debris may be cut manually and/or mechanically. Cut material shall be collected, removed, and properly disposed of. **EXCEPTION:** Cut material, which is finely mulched, does not have to be collected and removed.

ROTOTILLING OR DISCING: Combustible weeds and debris shall be turned under the soil.

SCRAPING: Combustible weeds and debris may be scraped manually and/or mechanically. The scraped material shall be collected, removed, and properly disposed of.

CHEMICAL SPRAYING: Weeds may be sprayed to prevent growth. This is a preventative measure to be conducted prior to the weeds reaching maturity or drying out.

Note: Combustible weeds and debris shall not be removed by burning. Firebreaks shall be tilled, disked, or scraped.

Fire-Safe Landscaping

Fire-safe landscaping is not necessarily the same thing as a well-maintained yard. Fire-safe landscaping uses fire-resistant plants that are strategically planted to resist the spread of fire to your location.

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Choose Fire-Resistant Plants and Materials

- Create fire-safe zones with stone walls, patios, swimming pools, decks, and roadways
- Use rock, mulch, flower beds, and gardens as ground cover for bare spaces and as effective firebreaks
- There are no "fire-proof" plants. Select high moisture plants that grow close to the ground and have a low sap or resin content
- Choose fire retardant plant species that resist ignition such as rockrose, ice plant, and aloe
- Fire-resistant shrubs include hedging roses, bush honeysuckles, currant, cotoneaster, sumac, and shrub apples
- Plant hardwood, maple, poplar, and cherry trees which are less flammable than pine, fir, and other conifers
- Check your local nursery, landscape contractor, or county extension service for advice on fire resistant plants that are suited for your environment, and help to plan you landscape

Other Mitigation Techniques

- Store firewood at least 30 feet from any building
- Cover chimneys with a screen
- Ask your utility company to trim trees away from power lines
- Check condition of fire extinguishers
- Practice fire drills and emergency evacuation for residents, visitors, and customers
- Ensure residents, visitors, and customers know escape routes and rally meeting points
- Place combustible patio furniture inside
- Note the location of the closest fire hydrant or water supply
- In remote country areas, consider installing a pond
- Keep exterior operational hoses connected to faucets
- Have a hose long enough to reach all areas of your structure(s)
- Keep the following readily available: an approved ladder that will reach the roof of your building(s), a rake, an axe, a handsaw or chainsaw, a bucket, and a shovel
- Only fight a fire if you are secure and capable of doing so. Ask your local fire department for training

Resources

Contact your local fire authority. Many are available to review your location and provide professional insight to your defensible space needs.

[Ready for Wildfire by Cal Fire](#)

[US Drought Portal](#)

[Cal Fire](#)

[Firescaping – Landscape Design for Defensible Space](#)

[S.A.F.E. Landscapes](#)

[Fire-Resistant California Friendly Plants](#)

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