

Homeowners Tips — Prepare for Wildfires

Living In southern California, we are all aware that the threat of wildfire damage to homes has become a greater concern. A wildfire can begin unnoticed but spread rapidly, destroying everything in its path. By spotting hazards and taking some simple precautions, you can help protect your home, family and property.

Family

Creating a disaster-preparedness plan and discussing wildfire safety will help reduce fear and anxiety. Discussing the following steps could save your life.

- Develop a family disaster plan.
- Locate two ways out of each room in the house.
- Develop a family evacuation plan with two escape routes out of your neighborhood.
- Chose an out-of-area location where the family should meet following the evacuation.
- Distribute two phone numbers of two people to family members. Family members can then call these numbers during an emergency and report their locations — plus find out locations of other family members.
- Teach children about fire safety.
- Post emergency fire numbers near all phones.

Home

Many proven precautions can lessen the chance of damage to your home:

- Make sure your home is accessible to emergency vehicles. Mark driveway entrances, and post your house number so it can be easily seen.
- Select building materials that resist fire. Use fire-resistant or noncombustible material — such as tile, stucco, brick, stone and metal siding — on the structure's exterior, including the roof.
- Clear roof, eaves, and gutters of all debris, such as leaves and branches.
- Remove branches that overhang the roof.
- Identify an adequate outside water source — such as a hydrant, pond or swimming pool — that can be used in an emergency to combat the wildfire.
- Keep a garden hose that is long enough to reach all areas of your home and other

structures on your property.

- Consider installing fire sprinklers inside your home.
- Do not store firewood against the home or other structures. Stack firewood at least 30 feet from your house.

Plants

When your home is located in a high-risk fire area, it is especially important to be aware of the surrounding vegetation. Below are some steps that can assist you in creating zones of fire-resistance around your home and other buildings to slow the spread of flames.

- When landscaping, plant fire-resistant trees and shrubs and ground cover (hardwood trees and ice plant, for example) to reduce the spread of fire. This will make it less likely for plants to catch fire and spread the fire closer to your home.
- Create a safety zone at least 30 feet from all structures by removing all flammable vegetation.
- Remove all vines from your home and structures. Even live and healthy vines can spread fire very rapidly.
- Regularly mow and water all lawns.
- Keep your property free of debris, such as leaves, fallen branches and twigs. This will help reduce fire fuel.
- Trim trees regularly and remove all dead branches. Keep limbs trimmed so that they do not come in contact with electrical wires and are at least 15 feet from the chimney.
- Have a professional tree service remove the limbs of mature, full-size trees within six to 10 feet from the ground. Also, thin the crowns.