



With fire season starting listed below are tips and ideas to protect yourself and your property.

- Build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.
- Know more than one exit route in case you have to evacuate.
- Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees.
- Remove leaves and other debris from the roof and gutters.
- Inspect chimneys at least twice a year and clean them at least once a year.
- Use 1/8-inch mesh screen beneath porches, decks, floor areas, and the home itself to help keep embers out.
- Install a dual-sensor smoke alarm on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Be sure to test the alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once each year.
- Teach each family member how to use a fire extinguisher and show them where it's located.
- Keep a ladder that will reach the roof.
- Consider installing protective shutters or heavy fire-resistant drapes.
- Clear items that will burn from around the house, including wood piles, wooden lawn furniture, barbecue grills, tarp coverings, etc. Move them outside of your **defensible space (link is external)**.

Preparing a Safety Zone for Your Home

Create a 30 to 100 foot safety zone around your home. Within this area, you can take steps to reduce potential exposure to flames and radiant heat. Homes built in pine forests should have a minimum safety zone of 100 feet. If your home sits on a steep slope, standard protective measures may not be enough – contact your local fire department or forestry office for specific information.

Within the zone, you will want to take the following steps:

- Rake and remove leaves, dead limbs and twigs – clear all flammable vegetation.
- Remove leaves and rubbish from under structures.
- Thin a 15-foot space between tree tops and remove limbs within 15 feet of the ground.

- Remove dead branches that extend over the roof.
- Prune tree branches and shrubs within 15 feet of a stovepipe or chimney outlet.
- Ask the power company to clear branches from power lines.
- Remove vines from the walls of the home.
- Mow grass regularly.
- Clear a 10-foot area around propane tanks and the barbecue. Place a screen over the grill – use nonflammable material with mesh no coarser than one-quarter inch.
- Regularly dispose of newspapers and rubbish at an approved site. Follow local burning regulations.
- Place stove, fireplace and grill ashes in a metal bucket, soak in water for 2 days, then bury the cold ashes in mineral soil.
- Store gasoline, oily rags and other flammable materials in approved safety cans. Place cans in a safe location away from the base of buildings.
- Stack firewood at least 100 feet away and uphill from your home. Clear combustible material within 20 feet of the wood pile.
- Review your homeowner's insurance policy and also prepare/update an inventory of your home's contents.