

What Can Be Done to Reduce Home Loss from Wildfire?

Since the 1960s, researchers and firefighters have analyzed the causes of home loss in wildland fires. Their work clearly has indicated that to effectively reduce home loss, **we must treat BOTH the VEGETATION** surrounding buildings **AND the BUILDINGS** themselves.

Treating the Vegetation: Defensible Space

Defensible space is crucial for three reasons: to save lives of residents and firefighters, to keep fires that start in structures from escaping into the wildland, and to prevent home loss in a wildfire. Reducing vegetation helps protect structures by ensuring that intense radiant heat and flames from burning vegetation are far enough away that they don't ignite the structure.

"Defensible space" does not mean "moonscape." A good defensible space is likely to have trees, but low branches and brush are modified to remove "ladder fuels," and trees and brush are separated to achieve a healthier and more fire resistant landscape. Your defensible space landscape should be even more beautiful and wildlife-friendly than before treatment.



Defensible Space: Start at the house and work outwards to 100 feet or the property line.

But there is much more to the picture than vegetation.

Treating the Structure: Protecting Homes through Better Design and Materials

In areas at risk to wildfires, our buildings should be adapted to withstand the multiple threats of wildfire without igniting. "Fire brands"—burning embers that can be carried for miles on the wind to fall on or near buildings, are a significant cause of wildfire home ignition. This threat can best be addressed by treating the house so that, even if firebrands fall on it, it is much less likely to ignite.

Existing homes can be modified to greatly increase their chances of surviving a wildfire. While some critically important modifications may be expensive, such as replacing a roof with a "Class A" material, many vulnerabilities can be modified with low-cost, low-tech solutions.

Please take some time to look at the information that can help you adapt your home and property to survive in a wildfire prone environment. The following resource list is a good starting place, but is by no means complete. The answers are out there! Feel free to contact Fire Safe Sonoma with any questions.



Creating Wildfire Adapted Homes and Landscapes Some Resources to Learn More

There is a wealth of information available pertaining to structure ignition during wildland fires. Here are just a few of the great resources out there. Remember, the time you spend could save your family, your home and your local wildlands.

Fire Safe Councils: for local programs and great information!

- Fire Safe Sonoma: FireSafeSonoma.org *Living with Fire* and the *County CWPP*
- Fire Safe Marin: FireSafeMarin.org Great plant list, and tons of important information
- Napa Firewise: NapaFirewise.org

Preparing your home and community for wildfire

- ReadyForWildfire.org: CAL FIRE's "Ready-Set-Go" program provides great information about the steps you should take to prepare your home and family for wildfire, before, during and after a wildfire.
- FireWise.org The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firewise USA® program teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent losses. Tons of great information and tips to help inspire the entire community.

Structure Hardening and Home Survival in Wildfire-Prone Areas:

- The **Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety** is an awesome resource at www.disastersafety.org/wildfire/. There you can find research-based publications about vulnerable elements on your home and how to fix them, and a host of critical information about wildfire preparedness.
- **University of California** www.ucanr.edu/sites/Wildfire/ *Homeowner's Wildfire Mitigation Guide*. Based on findings from fire tests, observations of wildfire damage, and input from firefighters, this site provides easily accessible information about each vulnerable part of structures.



This document was created by Fire Safe Sonoma, Sonoma County's non-profit fire safe council. Our mission:

To promote fire safety and protect natural and manmade resources in Sonoma County through education, information exchange, resource sharing and community cooperation.

You can learn more about Fire Safe Sonoma on the **web** at www.firesafesonoma.org

Phone: 707.206.5467

Email: info@firesafesonoma.org

Join with us to make Sonoma County a
Wildfire Adapted Community!