

# How to Protect your Home from Wildfires



## Santa Clara County FireSafe Council

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The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCCFSC) is a local 501(c)3 non-profit organization that shares a common, vested interest in preventing and reducing losses from wildfires.



[SCCFireSafe.org](http://SCCFireSafe.org)

## Our Mission



“Mobilizing the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfires.”



# Today's Goals

- Defensible space concepts
- Ember Awareness
- Prepare you to analyze your own property
  - Many examples
- Q&A



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# Defensible Space

- Defensible space reduces fuels
- Protects homes
- Protects lives/residents
- Creates a safe area for firefighters to protect your home



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# Immediate Zone: 0-5 feet

## Gray Zone

- no plants
- nothing flammable
- hardscapes
  - boulders
  - birdbaths
  - pathways



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# Intermediate Zone: 5-30 feet

## Green Zone

- Manicured & Irrigated
- Intermixed with hardscape features
- Control vertical and horizontal spacing



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# Zone 5'-30'



- Avoid continuous plantings right up to your home
- Remove tree branches within 10' of your home
- Use hardscape in a network to reduce amount of fuel

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## Vertical & Horizontal Spacing are Key

### Vertical Space

- Vertical flame height is 3-5 times height of plant
- Limb up trees
- Keep bushes low

### Horizontal Distance

- 3-6 feet between plants
- Keep dead portions cleaned up
- Keep leaves and needles cleaned up



Example: A five foot shrub is growing near a tree.  
 $3 \times 5 = 15$  feet of clearance needed between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branch.

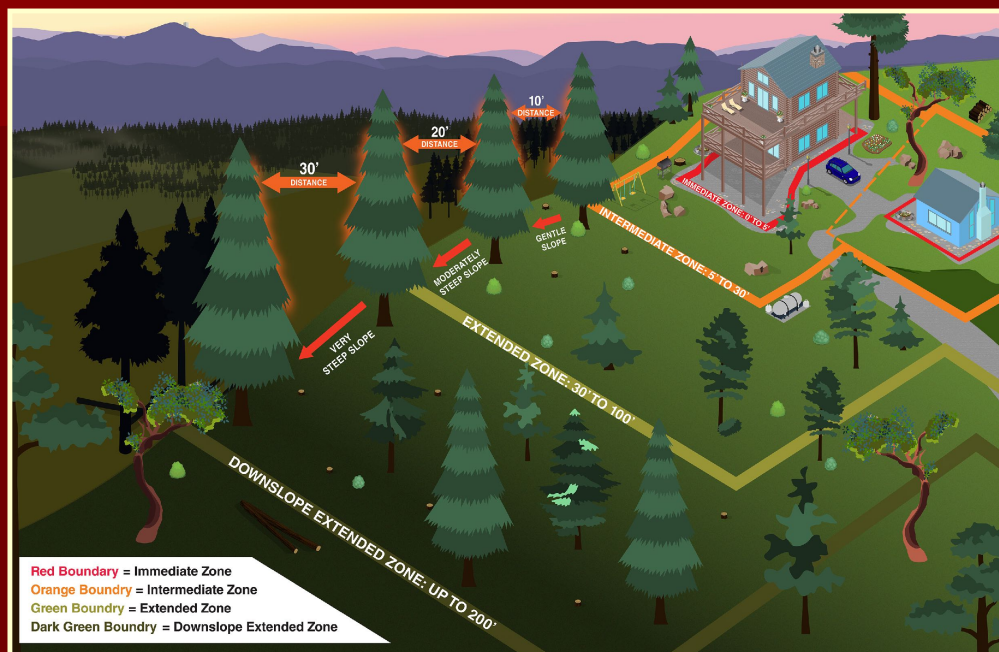
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## Lean, Clean and Green

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### 3. Extended Zone: 30-100 feet



Again spacing and hygiene are key

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# Extended Zone 30'-100'



Limb up or "skirt" trees to give space below the canopy

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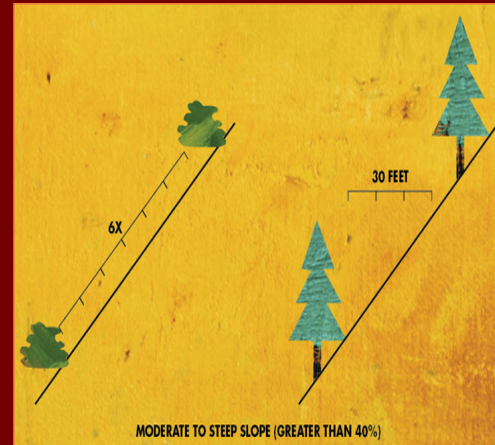
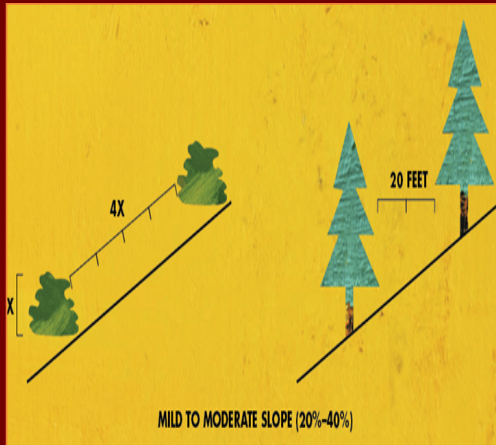
# Slope



- Steeper slope = more space
- Spacing and hygiene are key

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# Slope



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# Embers/Firebrands

- Can be carried or blown 5 miles or more
- Extreme conditions: dry & windy can be up to 30 miles
- What will it land on?
- Will it self extinguish, smolder or ignite?



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# Home Ignition Zone-Be Ember Aware



Where are needle and leaf debris accumulating on your property?



That is where the wind will carry the embers

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## Embers/Firebrands



Embers will pass through defensible space...  
Is where they land ignitable?

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# Decks



Surfaces within 10 feet of the building should be built with ignition-resistant, noncombustible, or other approved materials.



- Remove all combustible items from underneath deck
- Limit combustible items on top of deck



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# Fence



Construct fences using ignition-resistant, noncombustible materials within eight feet of your home.

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# Roof

Homes with wood or shingle roofs are at high risk of being destroyed during a wildfire.



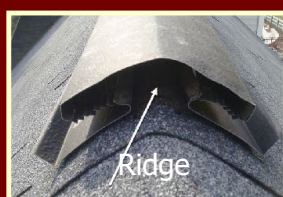
- Roof coverings should be composition, metal or tile
- Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent embers from catching

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# Roof Vents

Vents create openings for flying embers

- Inspect vents to ensure they are in good condition with no tears or large openings
- Cover all vent openings with 1/16 to 1/8 inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh screen
- Consider replacing screened vents with ember and flame-resistant vents
- Avoid storing combustible items near attic or crawl space vents



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# Chimneys

- Cover chimney and stovepipe outlets with spark arrestors
- Close the chimney flue when not in use
- Make sure tree branches are at least 10 feet from chimney



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# Skylights



- Remove accumulated debris
- Consider replacing acrylic glass for tempered glass

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# Rain Gutters

- Screen or enclose with noncombustible corrosion-resistant materials to prevent accumulation of plant debris.



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# Eaves and Soffits

Major point of entry for flying embers from fires miles away or flames from nearby vegetation or other material burning.

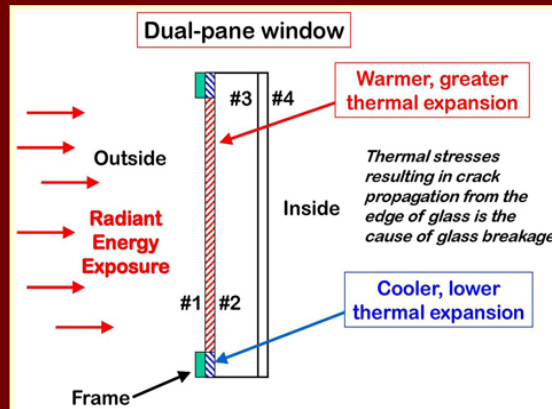
- Cover all openings with 1/16 to 1/8 inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh screen
- Plug or caulk gaps greater than 1/8 inch in size with durable caulk
- Enclose eaves with ignition-resistant or noncombustible materials if possible



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# Windows

Heat from a wildfire can cause windows to break before the home ignites, allowing embers to enter and start fires inside. Single-paned and large windows are particularly at risk



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# Windows



- Install dual or multi-paned tempered windows
- Tempered glass will have a marking etched on one of the corners, similar to that shown in the picture
- Install metal mesh screens on openable windows to increase ember resistance and reduce radiant heat exposure

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# Shutters



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## Foundations and Exterior Walls

- Remove combustible materials
- Screen wall openings with 1/8 inch metal screen
- Plug or caulk gaps & joints greater than 1/8 inch
- Use closure devices on vents



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# Notice what's burning?



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## Learn More



Contact:

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(408) 772-7518

Resources:

[sccfiresafe.org](https://sccfiresafe.org)

[readyforwildfire.gov](https://readyforwildfire.gov)



SANTA CLARA COUNTY  
**CWPP**  
COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

**FINAL  
PUBLIC OUTREACH  
MEETING**

August 30, 2023 - 6pm-7:30pm  
Los Gatos Lodge  
50 Saratoga-Los Gatos Rd,  
Los Gatos, CA 95032

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