



# HOW TO SAFEGUARD (HARDEN) YOUR HOME



The ability of your home to survive a wildfire depends on its construction materials and the quality of the “defensible space” surrounding it. Windblown embers from a wildfire will find the weak link in your home’s fire protection scheme and gain the upper hand because of a small, overlooked or seemingly inconsequential factor. However, there are measures you can take to safeguard your home from wildfire. While you may not be able to accomplish all of the measures listed below, each will increase your home’s - and possibly your family’s - safety and survival.

## Tour a Wildfire-Ready Home

### Address 1

- Make sure your address is clearly visible to first responders from the road.

### Chimney 2

- Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with a non-flammable screen of ¼-inch wire mesh or smaller to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.
- Make sure that your chimney is at least 10 feet away from any tree branches.

### Deck/Patio Cover 3

- Use heavy timber or non-flammable construction material for decks and patio covers.
- Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire-resistant materials to prevent embers from igniting items underneath.
- Keep your deck clear of combustible items, such as baskets, dried flower arrangements, and other debris.
- Make sure any decking surface is ignition-resistant if it’s within 10 feet of the home.

### Driveways and Access Roads 4

- Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your home.
- Access roads should have a minimum 10-foot clearance on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic.
- Ensure that all gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment.
- Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road to a minimum of 13½ feet to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

### Garage 5

- Have a fire extinguisher and tools, such as a shovel, rake, bucket, and hoe, available for fire emergencies.



- Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and the garage. Install weather stripping around and under the doors to prevent ember intrusion.
- Store all combustibles and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.

### Home Site and Yard 6

- Ensure you have at least a 100-foot radius of defensible space (managed vegetation) around your home. This means looking past what you own to determine the impact a common slope or neighbor’s yard will have on your property during a wildfire.
- Cut dry weeds and grass before noon when temperatures are cooler to reduce the chance of sparking a fire.
- Landscape with fire-resistant plants that are low-growing with high-moisture content.
- Keep woodpiles, propane tanks, and combustible materials away from your home and other structures, such as garages, barns, and sheds.
- Ensure trees and branches are at least four feet away from power lines.

## Inside



- Keep fire extinguishers in working condition on hand and train your family how to use them (check expiration dates regularly).



- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and near bedrooms. Test them monthly and change the batteries twice a year.

## Non-Combustible Boxed-In (Soffit) Eaves

- Box-in eaves with non-combustible materials to prevent accumulation of embers.



## Non-Combustible Fencing 7

- Make sure to use non-combustible fencing to protect your home during a wildfire.

## Rain Gutters

- Clear pine needles, leaves, and other debris from your roof and gutters.
- Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.



## Roof 8

- Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from windblown embers.
- Homes with wood shake or shingle roofs are at a higher risk of being destroyed during a wildfire.
- Build your roof or re-roof with fire-resistant materials that include composition, metal, or tile.
- Block any spaces between roof decking and patio covering to prevent ember intrusion.
- Cut any tree branches within 10 feet of your roof and home.

## Vents

- Vents on homes are particularly vulnerable to flying embers.
- All vent openings should be covered with 1/8-inch or smaller metal mesh. Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh because they can melt and burn.
- Attic vents in eaves or cornices should be baffled to prevent ember intrusion (mesh is not enough).



## Walls 9

- Wood products, such as boards, panels, or shingles, are common siding materials. However, they are combustible and not good choices for fire-prone areas.
- Build or remodel with fire-resistant building materials, such as brick, cement, masonry, or stucco.
- Be sure to extend materials from foundation to roof.

## Water Supply 10



- Have multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and other structures on your property.
- If you have a pool or well, consider a pump.

## Windows 11

- Heat from a wildfire can cause windows to break even before the home ignites. This allows burning embers to enter and start internal fires. Single-paned and large windows are particularly vulnerable.
- Install dual-paned windows with an exterior pane of tempered glass to reduce the chance of breakage in a fire.
- Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation.

## Utilities

- Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are and how to safely turn them off in an emergency.



### LOS ANGELES COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Also available on [fire.lacounty.gov](http://fire.lacounty.gov)

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