



PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM A WILDLAND FIRE

'Tis the season for wildland fires! Because wildland season is underway, there are important steps you can take to protect your home from the tragedies associated with wildland fires. We cannot predict when a fire will occur, however, we can take precautions to protect our home and surrounding land area. This brochure was developed to share information on factors attributing to wildland fires, while providing information to assist you in preparing for, and limiting the impact of, a wildland fire.

Environmental conditions are forces we cannot control. We can however, predict, to some extent, their occurrence. Conditions that contribute to wildland fires include:

- high temperatures
- warm winds
- steep hills
- overgrown vegetation
- dry grass

LANDSCAPE

To assist in limiting the damage from a fire, it is important to plan and maintain your landscape with these conditions in mind. One of the simplest things you can do to protect yourself and home is to remove dead, dying and overgrown vegetation. These items are vulnerable to fire because they are easily ignited from windblown sparks. Removing dead limbs, raking leaves and disposing of rubbish are simple steps you can take to reduce this risk and create a fire safe zone. Another term for creating this "space" is called a defensible space. A defensible space, required under California State Law, and as a result of the Oakland fire, is when you are able to create a landscape for at least 30 feet around your house (100 feet or more in some areas such as pine forests) which is fire safe. This space is important because it can reduce the chance of wildland fire spreading onto your property.

A landscape consisting of vegetation based on fire resistance and ease of maintenance serves to obtain a fire safe zone, and create a pleasant surrounding. Examples* of fire resistive plants include:

Ground Covers:

Morning Glory Bush
Rock Rose
Ice Plant
Statice
Ivy

Shrubs:

Bearberry
Silver Spreader
Texas Privet
Oleander
Cataline Cherry

Trees:

Carob
California Pepper
African Suman
Brazilian Pepper

Succulents:

Hottentot Fig
White Trailing Ice Plant
Rosea Ice Plant
Stonecrops

* Contact your local nursery for a more complete listing and for selections appropriate to your area.

Here are some tips to help you in choosing the right plant for your landscape. Select plants which:

- grow close to the ground;
- have a low resin or sap content;
- grow without accumulating dead branches, and leaves
- are easily maintained
- have a high tolerance for drought

Give your plants adequate spacing and vary the height. Remember, the taller the plants, the wider apart they should be spaced.

Once you have created your safe zone, good maintenance on a regular schedule is a must!

- Prune trees, branches, and shrubs within 15 feet of a chimney and six feet from the ground to prevent fires from spreading into the trees.
- Clear combustible vegetation from beneath decks.
- Remove dead vines from the walls and dead limbs overhanging your roof.
- Clear leaves, twigs and other combustible material off roofs. Properly dispose of all cut vegetation, newspapers and rubbish by having it hauled to a local dumping ground.
- If necessary, call the power company to clear branches from power lines, where windy conditions may cause a fire.
- Stack firewood and scrap woodpiles at least 30 feet from the roof of your house and any other building on your property. Also, check the gutter several times during the spring, summer and fall and remove debris

VISABILITY OF ADDRESS

The first few minutes of a fire are the most critical for saving your home when threatened by fire. The fire department must be able to locate your home immediately. Street signs and house addresses must be clearly posted. The street name and numbers should be at least four inches tall on a contrasting background for visibility. Roads should be designed to accommodate through traffic, and should be maintained wide enough for a fire engine to easily pass through. If cars are regularly parked along a road making passage difficult, call your local fire department for assistance in creating a "no parking zone", or "fire lane".

EMERGENCY WATER SUPPLY

In some areas, an emergency water supply is essential for saving your home from the disasters of fire. Without a water source, firefighters have a small chance of protecting a threatened home or extinguishing a burning home. The recommended water storage supply of 2,500 gallons, roughly equal to the average ground pool 10 feet in diameter, will greatly increase the chances of preserving a home. Cooperation with your neighbors can result in the development of an emergency water storage facility that provides protection. With a water supply established, accessibility is another important factor in protecting your home. If the water is from a well, it is recommended that you have a fuel-powered generator to pump water in the event of power failure.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Flammable materials could be vulnerable to a wildland fire due to the design, construction, and location. If you have plans to remodel be sure to purchase fire resistance materials for your home. This may reduce the chance of the materials catching fire.

Exterior construction materials such as brick and stucco resist fire better than wood. If you have a wood exterior, it is pertinent to enclose balconies and decks with fire resistive materials. Without this, these areas can trap flames and burning embers that can ignite your home.

The roof is another vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from wind-blown sparks. The single most important step in protecting your roof is to build or re-roof with fire resistive or noncombustible materials. There are three classifications of fire resistive roofs:

- Class A: offers the best protection. Examples include: clay, metal, or concrete tiles and fiberglass shingles.
- Class B: offers medium protection. This includes standard tar and gravel roof, pressure cedar shingles and metal tile.
- Class C: offers the minimum protection. Asphalt shingles, standard tar and gravel roof, pressure cedar shingles are examples of class "C" roofs.

Although the measures mentioned in this brochure cannot guarantee full protection of your home in the event of a wildland fire, we hope it has provided you with information you can use to increase and maintain the safety of your home. If you have any questions please contact us, the Milpitas Fire Department at 586-3365.

*Why does Santa Clara County
need the FireSafe Council?*

Development in California has created wildland-urban interface communities amid the state's fire-dependent landscapes. The corresponding increased demand for fire services in the wildland-urban interface can only be met with a proactive community-based response.

The solution to the state's wildfire crisis is creating communities that can stand against wildfire. Living in California means learning to live with fire.

The Fire Safe Council empowers communities to become fire safe.

www.firesafecouncil.org

Smokey Says:

***“Give ‘em a break!
Provide a defensible
space”***



*Santa Clara
County
FireSafe Council*

**Public and Private
partners working
together to make
Santa Clara County
“Fire Safe”**

*What is the Santa Clara County
FireSafe Council?*

The FireSafe Council is a coalition of public and private sector organizations that share a common, vested interest in wildfire prevention and loss mitigation.

The mission of the FireSafe Council is:

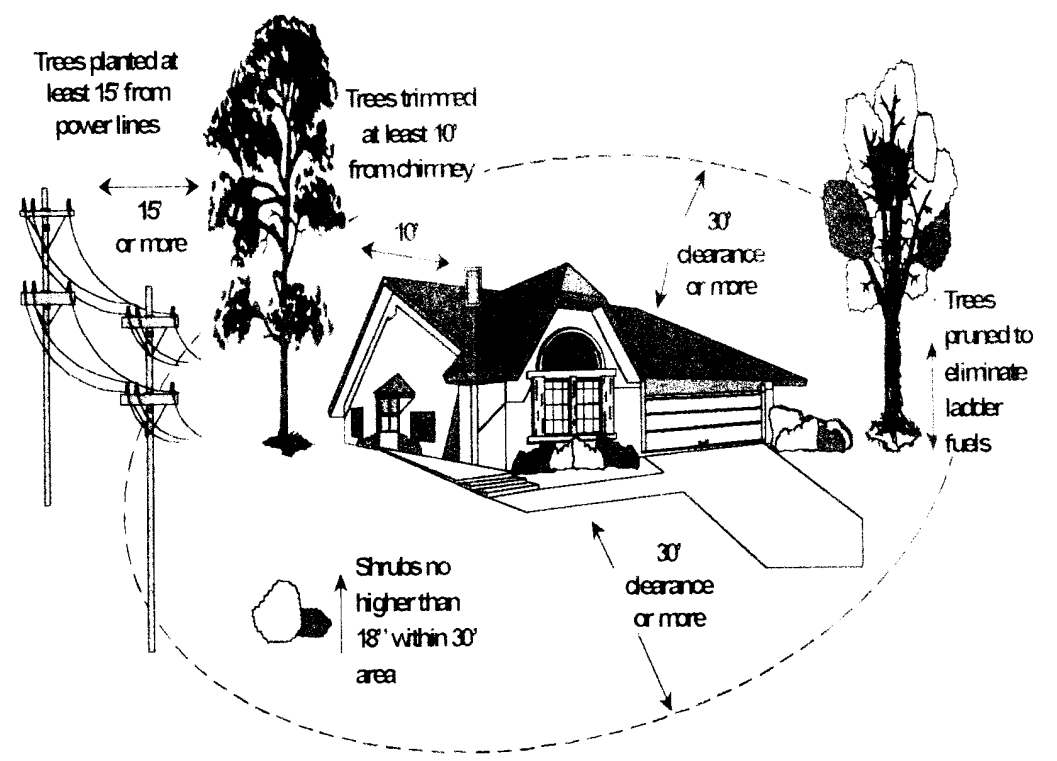
“To preserve Santa Clara County’s natural and manmade resources by mobilizing all County Citizens to make their homes, neighborhoods and communities fire safe”.

The mission is being fulfilled through the combined expertise, resources, and distribution channels of the FireSafe Council members.

For additional information call:

(408) 779-2121

Eliminate Dangers Around Your Home
Defensible Space is Sensible Space!



Note: Stumps and brush should be removed. The 30' buffer must be taken into consideration when planting new plants. Space is made for animals.