

# *When Nature Is Your Neighbor*

Defend Your Home Against Wildfires



**T**he City of Carlsbad is proud to have many beautiful open space areas interspersed among our neighborhoods. Beaches, lagoons and nature preserves enhance our quality of life and provide habitat to many special plants and animals. But, living near these natural open space areas is not without risks, including wildfires.

The area where homes meet the natural environment is known as the “wildland-urban interface.” The City of Carlsbad Fire Department works with homeowners and homeowners associations to reduce the chance of structure



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damage due to wildfires in these areas. Providing a fire suppression zone along the edge of the natural areas can help reduce your risk from wildfires. However, since the greatest fire risk is from airborne embers that can blow from long distances, the City of Carlsbad recommends taking the additional precautions described in this handout, even if your home is not right next to natural open space.

# At a Glance



Keep your **landscaping watered** and healthy. Remove dried and dead flammable plants at least **6 feet** from around your home.



**Trim trees** back away from the eave line so they don't overlap with the roof of the house.



Remove any **flammable** storage, like propane tanks and wood piles, near your home.



Ensure all **attic** venting and **chimneys** have **1/8 inch metal screens**.



Consider using **rock mulch** in areas where you want to prevent plants from growing, such as under decks or close to flammable materials. Wood chip mulch could catch on fire.



Regularly **clear leaves** and **debris** from your roof, gutters, decks and yard. An ember landing on these dried materials can easily fuel a fire.



**Close windows** and **doors** before evacuating, if time permits.

# What Is Defensible Space?

Defensible space is the area around a structure where flammable foliage and materials that can spread fire have been cleared, reduced or replaced. This space acts as a barrier between a structure and an advancing fire and its embers.

Defensible space is not just the “fire suppression zone” within the natural open space areas. Your backyard and the area adjacent to your home is just as, and sometimes even more, important.

**Defensible space** is the area around a structure where flammable foliage and materials that can spread fire have been cleared, reduced or replaced.



*Defensible space*



# How Much “Defensible Space” Is Enough?

**Defending your home against fire does not mean total removal of all plants.**

The single greatest threat to homes and businesses during a fire are “firebrands,” hot wood embers that can travel for miles during high winds. Increasing defensible space beyond what is recommended will not help protect against traveling embers. Clearing additional space could even result in more vulnerability to fire, since cleared areas tend to become invaded by grasses and other weeds that act as fuel for a fire.



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# Be in the “Zone”

Fire prevention experts often refer to three zones around your home. The size of each zone depends on local conditions and fire codes. In Carlsbad, it is generally recommended to create a 60 foot safety zone around your home. These zones should be free of dead flammable landscaping and maintained regularly.

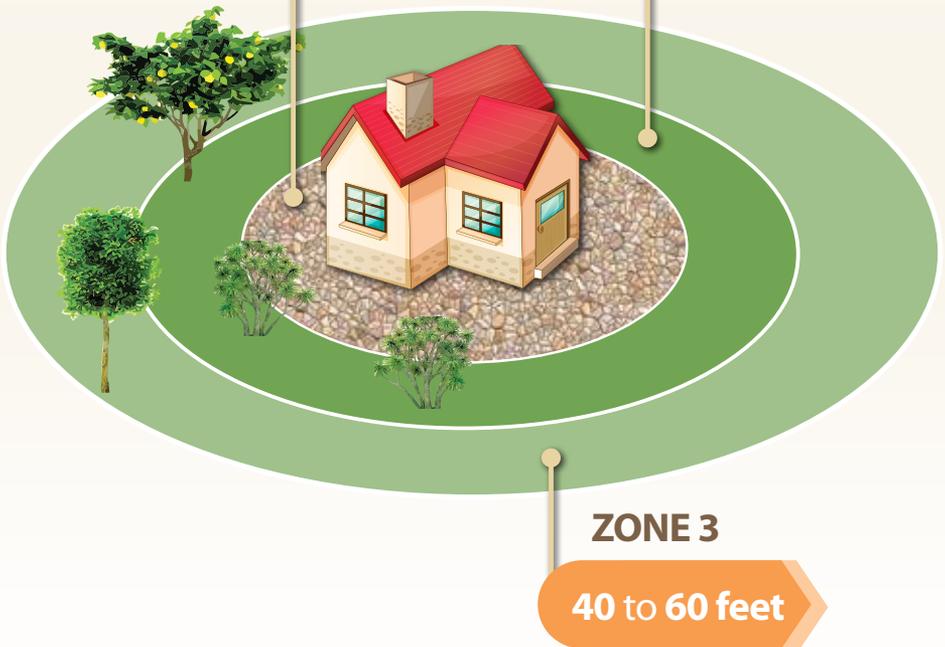
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## ZONE 1

0 to 20 feet

## ZONE 2

20 to 40 feet



## ZONE 3

40 to 60 feet



## Zone

# 1

**0 to 20 feet**

- Reduce the chance of wind blown embers catching materials near your home on fire.
- Remove debris from gutters.
- Cover attic, foundation and other vents with 1/8 inch metal mesh screens.
- Use rock or gravel mulch instead of wood chips in this area, and brick or concrete walkways. Keep firewood, lumber and other flammable materials away from your home.
- You may plant fire-resistant, irrigated landscaping in this area.



## Zone

# 2

**20 to 40 feet**

- Create a landscape that is not as likely to spread fire to your home.
- You may keep natural vegetation in this area.
- Native plants/shrubs that are retained should be thinned in a mosaic pattern (with space between plants). Grass or weeds should be cut back to no more than four inches above the ground.
- Move trailers/RVs, storage sheds and other flammable structures out of this area. If unable to move, create defensible space around them.



## Zone

# 3

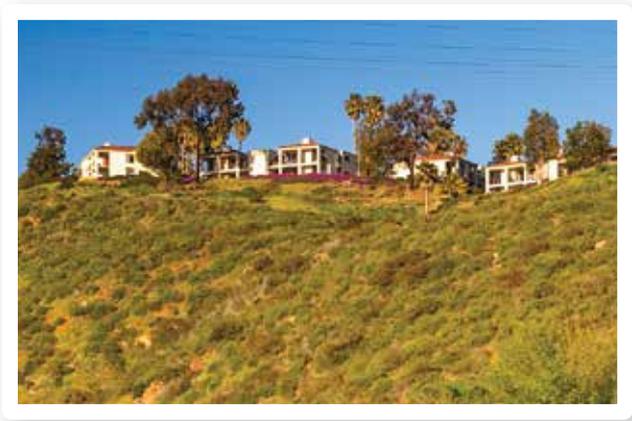
**40 to 60 feet**

- Thinning and regular maintenance will help to reduce the strength and speed of fire in this area.
- Remove dead plants and tree branches.
- Thin and separate trees and shrubs.

# What if an HOA Controls the Space Around Your Home?

Many Carlsbad neighborhoods are part of homeowners associations. HOAs are aware of the required maintenance standards. They should ensure the defensible space and “fuel modification zones” around your property

are maintained in the manner they were designed to. If you have concerns, contact your HOA board of directors.



# How Flammable Is Your Landscaping?

One way to check a plant is to crush a few leaves in your hand. A leaf that does not return to its original shape may have very little moisture content and will burn easily. If your fingers feel sticky or have a strong odor, it's a good indication the plant is flammable. In general, fire-resistant plants and trees have higher moisture content and are

often drought-tolerant. Ask your local nursery to recommend fire-resistant plants.

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# Is Your Property Next to Open Space?

Carlsbad is proud of its natural open spaces, but they do require care. Native vegetation within protected open space preserves may not be removed. Homeowners can only remove vegetation within their property. Pruning and/or removal within fuel modification zones outside of individual property lines are generally undertaken by an HOA under direction of the city's Fire Prevention Office. Clearing vegetation to bare soil is never recommended, because this can result in erosion and weeds, which can be a greater fire risk. If you have an "open space easement" on your property, no irrigation or non-native landscaping is allowed in that area. Remember, the greatest threat to your home will be embers and firebrands, which can travel long distances in high wind fire events. Clearing additional space above what is recommended will do little to reduce this hazard.



# Prepare for Emergencies

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Look around your neighborhood. Do you have elderly neighbors who might need help creating defensible space around their homes (and yours)? Are some of your neighbors not aware of defensible space rules? Getting prepared for the next fire is a great opportunity to approach neighbors you might not know, introduce yourself and talk about how you can work together to make sure your neighborhood stays safe.



## Get Emergency Alerts

To make sure you get important information during an emergency, register your cell and VOIP (systems such as AT&T U-verse, Time Warner, Cox, Vonage, etc.) phones with AlertSanDiego, the county's reverse 9-1-1 notification system. Visit [www.readysandiego.org](http://www.readysandiego.org) to sign up for this free service. This is the best way to receive emergency notifications in threatened areas. First

### AlertSanDiego

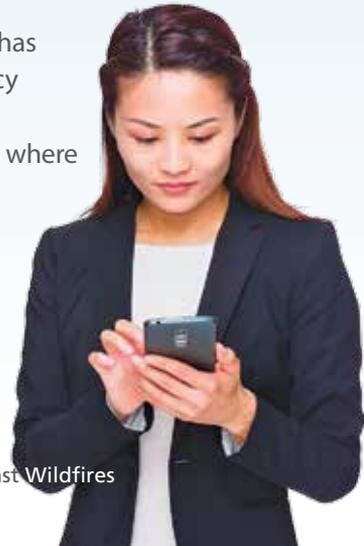
Get signed up. Get notified.

responders also will notify areas (door-to-door or by loud speakers) of evacuation orders, when possible.



The County of San Diego has a free app with emergency preparedness tips and a Carlsbad-specific section where important information will be available in an emergency.

Be sure to download it today by visiting [www.readysandiego.org](http://www.readysandiego.org).



# *Get Out, Fast*

## ***When a Wildfire Is Coming***

- When told to evacuate do so immediately. Staying behind puts you and first responders at risk.
- Lock your home.
- Do not block access to streets or driveways.
- Choose a route away from the fire hazard and follow law enforcement's evacuation directions.

## ***If Time Permits***

- Close windows, vents, doors, blinds or nonflammable window coverings.
- Open fireplace damper. Close fireplace screens.
- Turn off propane tanks, move propane barbecues away from the house.
- Move flammable patio furniture, trash carts and other combustible items away from your home.

# Put Together an Emergency Kit

- ❑ A three-day water supply (1 gallon per person per day is recommended)
- ❑ A three-day food supply that won't spoil, and a way to open it
- ❑ One change of clothing and shoes per person
- ❑ One blanket or sleeping bag per person
- ❑ A first aid kit that includes family prescriptions
- ❑ Emergency tools
- ❑ Extra set of car keys
- ❑ Flashlight
- ❑ Extra batteries
- ❑ Battery-powered radio
- ❑ Special items for infants, elderly or disabled family members
- ❑ Pet transport carrier and leash



- ❑ Pet food for three days
- ❑ Goggles (for high wind or blowing embers)
- ❑ Work gloves
- ❑ Face mask (rated "N95")
- ❑ Prescription medications
- ❑ Important documents (birth certificates, passports, insurance papers and inventory, tax, school and vaccination records, photos, etc.)
- ❑ Eyeglasses
- ❑ Jewelry
- ❑ Child's favorite toy, book or game
- ❑ External drive or computer backup
- ❑ Cash (in case ATMs are out of service)
- ❑ Cell phone and charger
- ❑ Laptop and charger



The City of Carlsbad is making free emergency preparedness guides available to residents on the city website and at city libraries and community centers.

The city encourages all residents to pick up a copy, or view the online version, and follow the tips included for making a

family emergency plan, creating an emergency kit, registering mobile phones and emails with Alert San Diego and other important steps to ensure the community is prepared for the next emergency.

## Want More Information?

Fire Prevention Office, 1635 Faraday Ave.  
 Carlsbad, CA 92008 • 760-602-4665  
[www.carlsbadca.gov/fire](http://www.carlsbadca.gov/fire)

