

1.1 **Wildland Fires**

Wildland fires are usually uncontrolled fires that are fueled by and spread through vegetated areas exposing and / or possibly consuming structures. They often begin unnoticed and spread quickly. A significant portion of the SRP and its surrounding areas are considered wildland - urban area interfaces. It is not uncommon for these areas to experience prolonged droughts resulting in excessive dryness that places these areas at high risk of wildland fires. Wildland fire hazards exist, in varying degrees, over 90% of Riverside County (open space, parklands and agricultural areas). The fire season extends for five to six months – from late spring through fall. Hazards arise from a combination of reasons: the undeveloped and rugged terrain, highly flammable brush-covered lands and long dry summers. There are heavy fuel loads, especially in the watershed areas that have been unaffected by fire for many years. Structures with wood shake roofs ignite easily and produce embers that can contribute to fire spread. Plus the annual Santa Ana winds pose an added threat of spreading wildland fires to the communities. The aftermath of wildland fire then produces potential landslide areas as burned and defoliated surfaces are exposed to winter rains.

In both October of 2003 and 2007, Southern California experienced the most devastating wildland fire disasters in California's history. Southern California continues to be a prime area for major fire disaster due to its extensive dry and desert-like environment, persistent droughts, urban sprawl of communities encroaching into areas of wildland and the millions of acres of vegetation that have not burned in many years.

FEMA has a 16-page booklet, "**After the Fire! Returning to Normal,**" available via the FEMA web site. This booklet provides information on recovering from a fire, including what to do during the first 24 hours, insurance considerations, valuing your property, replacement of valuable documents, salvage hints, fire department operations and more. Go to <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens>. Click on "**Fire Safety for all Citizens**" for detailed information.

1.1.1 **Wildland Fire Preparedness**

The threat of wildland fires for the communities of the Plateau is real. Extended periods of drought or dry conditions and Santa Ana winds greatly increase the potential for wildland fires in these areas.

Advance planning and knowing how to protect buildings can lessen the devastation of a wildland fire. There are several safety precautions that you can take to reduce the risk of fire losses and protect your property from a wildland fire. You'll need to consider the fire resistance of your home, the topography of your property and the nature of the vegetation close by. Learn about the history of wildfire in your area. Consider having a professional inspect your property and offer recommendations for reducing the wildfire risk. Determine your community's ability to respond to wildfire. Are roads leading to your property clearly marked? Are the roads wide enough to allow firefighting equipment to get through? Is your house number visible from the roadside?

Several of the following suggestions you can implement immediately. Others need to be considered at the time of construction or remodeling. You should also contact your local fire authorities or building department to obtain information about local fire laws, building codes, weed abatement ordinances and protection measures.

1.1.1.1 Preparing the Outside of Your Home Checklist

Fire preparedness starts with clearing the combustible growth away from your structures. The law requires thinning of vegetation to a distance of at least 100 feet from any structure. If the vegetation is on your neighbor's property, volunteer to clear it with their permission. It will be cheaper than rebuilding your structures if they burn. Your local fire authority may require additional thinning.

Preparedness is the key to surviving wildland fires. SRPET suggests the following simple steps that may save your life, those of your family and protect your home from the devastating effects of wildland fires.

- Keep roofs and rain gutters free of needles, leaves or other debris
- Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire resistant material such as aluminum decking
- Enclose all roof eaves with fire resistant material such as aluminum or steel and place metal mesh over all attic or roof vents (See section 2.4.4 for solid attic vent covers)
- Create defensible space to separate your home from flammable vegetation and materials (minimum 100 feet on level terrain)
- For residences with steeper terrain below their property, additional defensible space is suggested (minimum 200 feet total)
- Adhere to all local fire and building codes and weed abatement ordinances
- Plant drought tolerant (water retentive) plants around your property
- Keep all trees and shrub limbs trimmed so they do not come into contact with electrical wires or overhang your chimney (Do not trim around live power lines yourself; call a professional)
- Prune all lower tree branches eight feet from the ground
- Keep trees adjacent to buildings free of dead or dying branches
- Keep all grass cut three inches or shorter for at least 100 feet around property
- Keep all combustibles including patio furniture away from any structure
- Store flammable liquids in approved containers
- Keep any combustibles away from propane tank area
- Keep a ladder nearby that will reach the roof
- Stack firewood at least 30 feet away from your home and other structures (Keep clearance around your piles)
- Equip chimney and stovepipes with spark arresters that meet the requirements of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Code 211 (Contact your local fire station / fire marshal for exact specifications)
- Inspect chimneys and spark arresters twice a year and clean chimneys once a year.
- Keep driveway clear of debris at all times
- Use approved fire resistant materials when building, renovating or retrofitting structures
- Be sure your house number shows clearly from the street, both day and night.
- Ensure that your street name is clearly marked and posted
- Make sure large emergency vehicles can access your property

Fireproofing Your Home

- **Evacuate** your pets and all family members who are not essential to preparing the home. Anyone with medical or physical limitations and the young and the elderly should be evacuated immediately.
- Wear protective clothing.
- **Remove Combustibles.** Clear items that will burn from around the house, including wood piles, lawn furniture, barbecue grills, tarp coverings, etc. Move them outside of your defensible space.

- **Close/Protect Openings.** Close outside attic, eaves and basement vents, windows, doors, pet doors, etc. Remove flammable drapes and curtains. Close all shutters, blinds or heavy non-combustible window coverings to reduce radiant heat.
- **Close Inside Doors/Open Damper.** Close all doors inside the house to prevent draft. Open the damper on your fireplace, but close the fireplace screen.
- **Shut Off Gas.** Shut off any natural gas,

- propane or fuel oil supplies at the source.
- **Water.** Connect garden hoses. Fill any pools, hot tubs, garbage cans, tubs or other large containers with water.
- **Pumps.** If you have gas-powered pumps for water, make sure they are fueled and ready.
- **Ladder.** Place a ladder against the house in clear view.
- **Car.** Back your car into the driveway

- and roll up the windows.
- **Garage Doors.** Disconnect any automatic garage door openers so that doors can still be opened by hand if the power goes out. Close all garage doors.
- **Valuables.** Place valuable papers, mementos and anything "you can't live without" inside the car in the garage, ready for quick departure. Any pets still with you should also be put in the car.

- **Preparing to Leave**
- **Lights.** Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room to make the house more visible in heavy smoke.
- **Don't Lock Up.** Leave doors and windows closed but unlocked. It may be necessary for firefighters to gain quick entry into your home to fight fire. The entire area will be isolated and patrolled by sheriff's deputies or police.

FIREPROOFING YOUR HOME

Some safety strategies to protect your home:

Yard

- Dispose of dead branches and grasses on all sides of the house
- Space trees, mow lawn
- Prune branches 15-20 ft. (4.5-6 m) from ground; consider low-flammability vegetation, especially on slopes

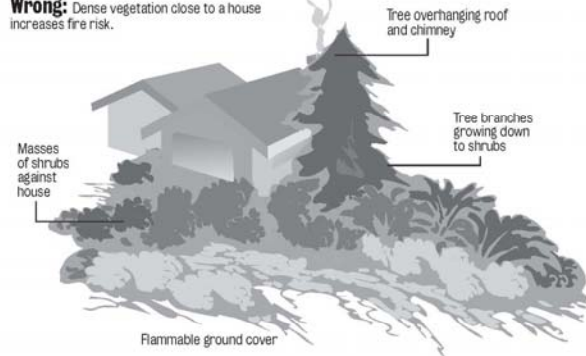
Roofing

- Avoid wood shingles
- Cover chimney with mesh to contain embers
- Keep roofs, eaves, awnings and rain gutters free of needles, leaves and debris

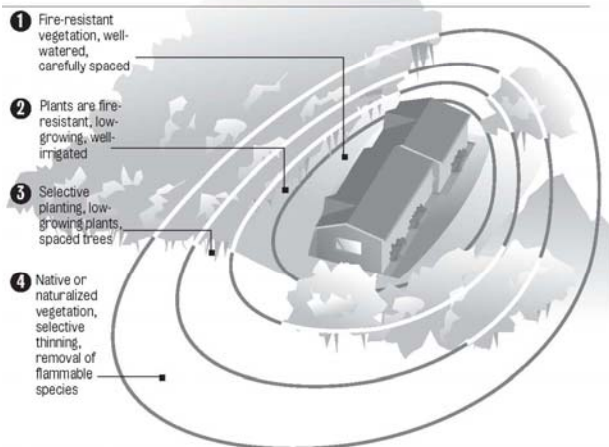
Slope

- Home should be set back from hill's crest.
- Decks and dry vegetation are at risk.

Wrong: Dense vegetation close to a house increases fire risk.



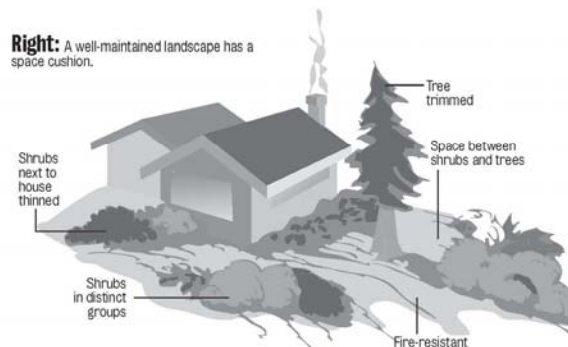
ZONES



Zone 1 – 15 feet
Zone 2 – 30 feet

Zone 3 – 100 feet
Zone 4 – 200 feet

Right: A well-maintained landscape has a space cushion.

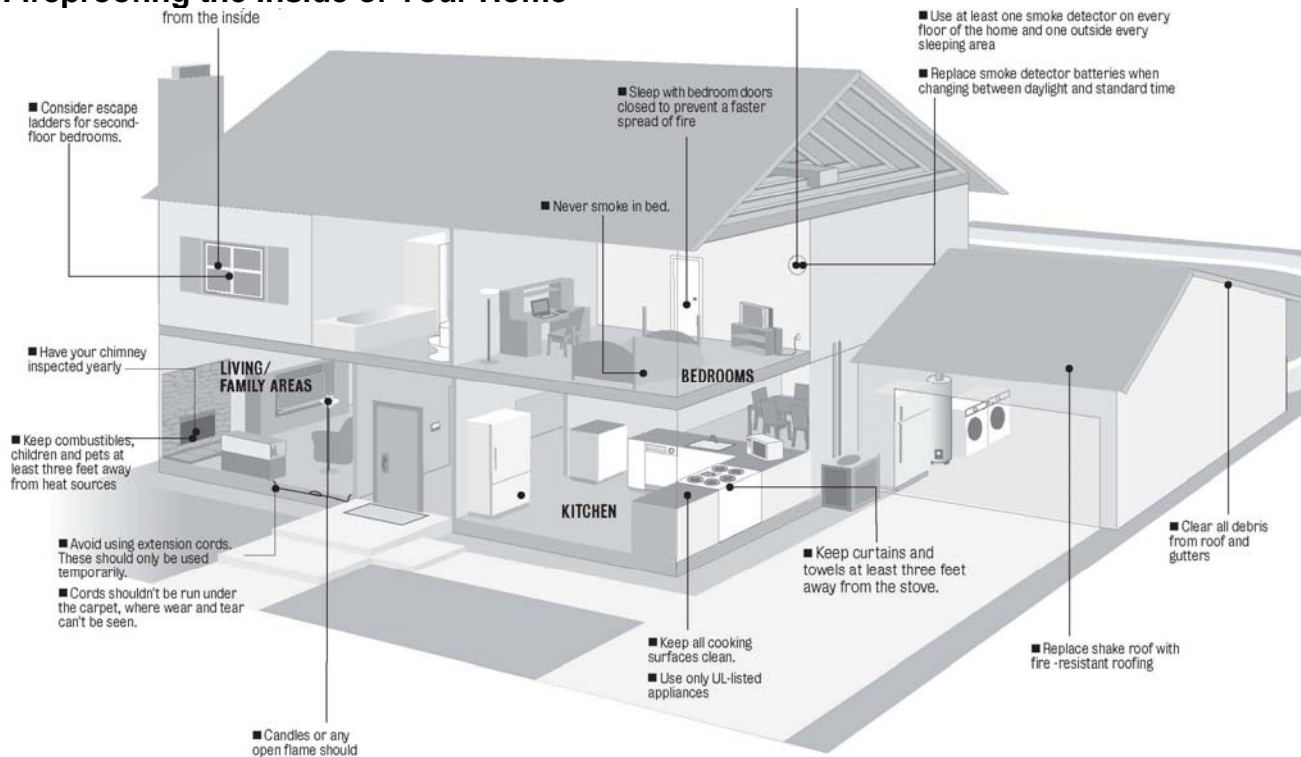


1.1.2 Preparing the Inside of Your Home Checklist

Remember, being prepared is one of the keys to surviving wildland fires. SRPET suggests the following simple steps that may save your life, those of your family and protect your home from the devastating effects of a wildland fire.

- Follow all local building, fire and hazard abatement codes
- Install smoke detectors on each level of your home, according to local building code, test them monthly and if one or more of your smoke detectors are battery operated, replace the batteries semi-annually
- Be sure you have properly operating fire extinguishers placed throughout your home and other structures
- Be careful when displaying your holiday decorations
- Carefully follow the instructions on all appliances and heating units and ensure not to overload your electrical system
- Keep matches, lighters and candles away from small children, especially children between the ages of 2 and 12 years old
- Be sure your heating and electrical systems are properly maintained, in good working order and change the heating filters as recommended by the manufacturer

Fireproofing the Inside of Your Home



Health Tip

Smoke can hurt your eyes, irritate your respiratory system and worsen chronic heart and lung diseases. Smoke may worsen symptoms for people who have pre-existing respiratory conditions such as respiratory allergies, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) during a fire. Listen and watch for news or health warnings. Pay attention to local air quality reports. Include N-95 Dura-masks in your “Go-Bags.”

1.1.3 When Wildfire Approaches Checklist

Wildland fires generally spread very quickly. An entire structure may rapidly become engulfed in flames. There are numerous steps you can take to minimize the dangers associated with fires and improve your family’s chance of survival.

- Fill sinks and tubs with water
- Listen to the radio or watch television for instructions from official sources regarding the emergency (TV and radio announcements will come via the Emergency Alert System (EAS) or you may receive a phone call at home or on your cell phone from the Early Warning Notification System (EWNS))
- Park your vehicles facing the direction of escape with windows rolled up and keys in the ignition
- Place your “Go Bags” and Family Emergency Supply Kit along with valuables and other essentials in your vehicle
- Secure pets and livestock and prepare them for evacuation
- Turn on outside lights and leave a light on in every room in the house to make the house more visible in heavy smoke
- If time permits, cover up by wearing long pants, a long sleeved shirt, goggles and cap (100% cotton is preferable)
- Close doors behind you when evacuating to slow down the flames, smoke and heat
- If possible, assist any young children, seniors and persons with functional needs
- Move upholstered furniture away from windows and sliding glass doors

- Close outside attic, eave and basement vents, windows, doors, pet doors etc. – cover roof vents with non-combustible material so that flying embers can not enter through the vents / gables (see pictures on next page)
- Open or remove flammable drapes and curtains
- Close all interior doors to prevent draft
- Close the damper on your fireplace
- Shut off any propane at the source
- Turn off air conditioning / air circulation systems
- If you have a gas-powered pump for water, make sure it is fueled and ready
- Open electric gates so that first responders will have immediate access to your home and be sure you and your family are familiar with this process
- Evacuate as soon as directed by public safety officials or when danger is perceived



Attic Vent from
inside



Attic Vent cover
inside



View of Attic Vent
from outside

1.1.4 Garage Door

- Disconnect any automatic garage door opener so that the garage door can still be opened by hand if the power goes out
- Use emergency release handle to dislodge trolley ONLY when garage door is CLOSED
- Weak or broken springs or unbalanced door could result in an open door falling rapidly and/or unexpectedly
- NEVER use emergency release handle unless garage doorway is clear of persons and obstructions
- Close garage door

1.1.4.1 How to disconnect the trolley

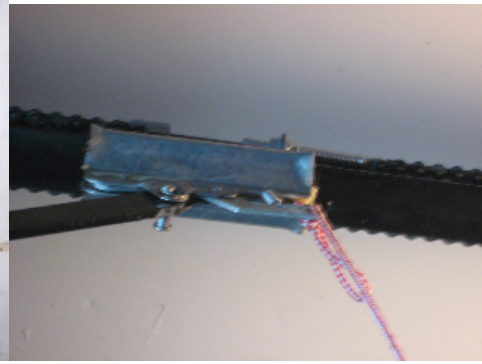
- The door should be fully closed if possible
- Pull down on the emergency release handle (so that the trolley release arm snaps into a vertical position) and lift the door manually
- The lockout feature prevents the trolley from reconnecting automatically and the door can be raised and lowered manually as often as necessary

1.1.4.2 To reconnect the trolley

- Pull the emergency release red handle toward the opener at a 45 degree angle so that the trolley release arm is horizontal
- The trolley will reconnect on the next UP or DOWN operation, either manually or by using the door control or remote



Red Handle



Garage Door Trolley

1.1.5 Avoiding a Household Fire

Protect your home from a house fire with some easy to follow fire safety tips including identifying fire escape routes and general fire protection safety and ensuring smokers exercise some caution. Here are some things you can do to avoid a home fire.

1.1.6 Avoiding a House Fire Checklist

- Do not leave items on the stovetop or in the oven unattended while cooking
- Keep flammable items including cleaners, solvents and paper or fabric away from the stove at all times
- Extinguish candles when leaving the room - do not leave candles burning, even if occupants will be gone "for just a minute" - make sure candles are completely out when retiring for the evening
- Never smoke in bed - be careful around all flammable materials - do not leave the room when a cigarette is burning
- Do not use fireworks
- Keep a careful watch on the barbecue (the National Fire Data Center estimates grills are the cause of more than 6,000 fires every year) - douse coals after use and do not over use the lighter fluid; sometimes barbecue fires can be hard to start, but they will flame up hours later
- Ensure that the fuel line connection is secure before using a gas grill
- Keep all grills in open areas to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning
- Smoke detectors and home fire alarms can help prevent injuries in case of a fire. Smoke detectors are inexpensive and are one of the best fire protection systems available
- Have a fire extinguisher in key areas such as the kitchen, bedrooms, workshop and garage – learn how to use a fire extinguisher
- Walk your family through a fire drill so everyone knows what to do and where to go in case of a fire
- Every room in the house should have at least two escape exits - if one of these is a window from a second story, install ladders that can be dropped from the windows - make sure children know where the family will reunite if they have to leave the house in case of a fire
- Assign a special closet for combustible materials and dangerous tools that you do not want your children to touch - put a lock on the door
- Do not overload electrical circuits with too many appliances - if your fuses blow or your circuit breakers are popping, hire an electrician to look at your system
- Do not run extension cords under rugs or carpets - cords can wear easily and may short out and start a fire

- Do not nail or staple electrical cords to the walls or baseboards - damaged cords can cause fire or shock hazards
- Replace frayed electrical cords before they can cause a fire
- Keep combustibles away from the water heater / furnace
- An electrical outlet or switch that is unusually warm or hot to the touch may indicate a potentially dangerous wiring condition - in such a situation unplug cords, avoid using switches and call an electrician to check the wiring
- Ceiling fixtures and recessed lights trap heat - use the manufacturer's recommendation for the correct wattage
- Always extinguish the fire in a wood stove or fireplace before leaving the house
- Unplug your hair dryer or any other small appliance in the bathroom when not in use
- Keep the handles of pots and frying pans turned inward
- To prevent grease fires, keep the stove clear of anything flammable, including pot holders, napkins and towels
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand for extinguishing kitchen fires but remember to dial 911 first even if you are confident you can extinguish the fire

1.1.7 In Case of Fire Checklist

- Call 911
 - Give your name, telephone number you are calling from, address, house number where the fire is, any helpful directions / description of location
 - Describe the type / nature of the fire (gas, wood, chemical, electrical)
 - Report any known injuries
- Turn off the electricity at the home(s) affected
- If you turn the gas off, you will need a professional to turn it back on**
- Get everyone out of the house **immediately**
- Without risk to any person**, get pets out of the house
- Immediately** let the fire department personnel know if any disabled person(s) or anyone not accounted for may still be in the residence
- Never go back into a burning home**
- If smoky conditions are present, remember that smoke rises and stay as close to the floor as possible
- Before exiting through a door, feel the bottom of the door with the palm of your hand - if it is **hot**, find another way out - **never open a door that is hot to the touch**
- Should your clothing catch fire: **Stop, drop...then roll. - Never run** - if a rug or blanket is handy; roll yourself up in it until the fire is out
- If trapped on an upper floor, hang something out of a window to signal rescuers