Here’s How to Get Started: Create a Fire Safe Landscape in Seven Steps

Step One
Evaluate the environment around your home. What will catch on fire? Be on the lookout for those “little things” that can burn your home, such as leaves, needles, bark, etc.—that can ignite and cause a fire to your home.

Step Two
Determine what you need to do. Start with the Closest Home Ignition Zone and work toward the Defensible Space Zone and through the Wildland Fuel Reduction Zone.

Step Three
Develop a plan for correcting any fire safe problems identified in steps one and two. Consider completing your work prior to the windiest months, such as November through March. Coordinate with adjacent land owners if possible and incorporate existing formal landscape features.

Step Four
Consider codes and regulations related to defensible space, burning, work performed near waterways, and tree removal; if necessary, secure permits such as burn permits. The Department of Fish & Game (DFG) should be consulted if any wood products from your property are sold, traded or bartered. Types of regulated wood products include sawmill logs, firewood or wood chips. For more information, contact your local DFG unit.

Step Five
Implement the plan. Get help and any needed equipment. Begin work in the Home Ignition Zone and work out from there. Remember: It’s the little things—such as patio furniture and cushions, leaves, needles, bark, etc.—that can ignite and cause a fire to your home.

Step Six
Remove all slash and debris generated during the fuel modification process by chipping, burning or disposal at your local vegetative waste site. Contact your local fire department for permit requirements. Contact your local Fire Safe Council about their chipping, home consultation and other programs. Find your local Fire Safe Council at www.FireSafeCouncil.org.

Step Seven
Continue to monitor and evaluate the fire safe condition of your home and landscape. Maintain your home’s resistance to fire and the defensible space in the surrounding property on a routine basis—annually or more frequently, if needed. For new construction, consider fire resistant materials such as concrete panels, stone, brick or other materials that don’t burn easily.

Is Your Home a Safe Place to Stay?
You live in an area of natural beauty—but it’s also prone to wildfire. In fact, it’s not a matter of if the grasslands of California will burn, it’s a matter of when that will happen.

Fortunately, you can take steps today to dramatically improve your odds of survival by making your property “fire safe.” A fire safe property is one where the home and landscape resist the impact of fire. A fire safe landscape is a beautiful landscape that not only protects your home from fire but can also increase the value of your home.

The Fire Environment
Fire behavior is affected by a variety of factors—some of these you can do something about and others are weather-related and beyond your control. Understanding these terms will help you make your home and the surrounding property fire safe.

Fuels: Any flammable materials that will burn. This includes everything from the home itself to plants, dried leaves in the rain gutter, brush, wood shingles, patio furniture and deckling material. If it will burn, it’s a fuel.

Ignition: The point at which a fire starts as a result of fuel contacting with embers, firebrands (hot, flying embers), direct flame, or superheated air.

Topography: Primarily slope or the steepness of the incline on which your house is situated. Also your home’s location on the slope and proximity to canyons or ravines.

Weather: Primarily wind, but also air temperature and humidity (moisture content of the air).

eXtreme X-Factor: A multiplication factor used to increase the defensible space around a home due to eXtreme fire behavior factors such as slope, and/or constant or unusually strong winds.

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Step One: Is Your Home a Safe Place to Stay?

Step Two: Determine what you need to do. Start with the Closest Home Ignition Zone and work toward the Defensible Space Zone and through the Wildland Fuel Reduction Zone.

Step Three: Develop a plan for correcting any fire safe problems identified in steps one and two. Consider completing your work prior to June 1 of each year before fuel conditions become too dry. Make sure your power tools have approved spark arresters and, if working in the summer months, complete all work before 10 a.m.

Step Four: Consider codes and regulations related to defensible space, burning, work performed near waterways, and tree removal; if necessary, secure permits such as burn permits. Contact your local Fire Safe Council at www.FireSafeCouncil.org.

Step Five: Implement the plan. Get help and any needed equipment. Begin work in the Home Ignition Zone and work out from there. Remember: It’s the little things—such as patio furniture and cushions, leaves, needles, bark, etc.—that can ignite and cause a fire to your home.

Step Six: Remove all slash and debris generated during the fuel modification process by chipping, burning or disposal at your local vegetative waste site. Contact your local fire department for permit requirements. Contact your local Fire Safe Council about their chipping, home consultation and other programs. Find your local Fire Safe Council at www.FireSafeCouncil.org.

Step Seven: Continue to monitor and evaluate the fire safe condition of your home and landscape. Maintain your home’s resistance to fire and the defensible space in the surrounding property on a routine basis—annually or more frequently, if needed. For new construction, consider fire resistant materials such as concrete panels, stone, brick or other materials that don’t burn easily.

Fire Safe Landscaping

Grassland

During the summer and fall months, a combination of low humidity, high temperatures and strong winds results in a “red flag” weather warning. During such a condition, the fire danger is very high. The X-Factor explained above helps provide that extra margin of defensible space necessary to keep your property fire safe.

DIABLO FIRESAFE COUNCIL

www.DiabloFireSafe.org
1. Keep your rain gutters and roof clean of all flammable material.

2. Get rid of dry grass, brush and other flammable materials around your home—and don’t forget leaves, pine needles and bark walkways. Replace with well maintained (watered) landscape vegetation, green lawn and landscape rocks.

3. Clear all flammable materials from your deck. This includes brooms, stacked wood and easily ignitable patio furniture. Also enclose or board up the area under your deck to keep it from becoming a fuel bed for hot embers.

4. Move woodpiles and garbage cans away from your home. Keep woodpiles away from the home a distance of 2 times the height of the pile—more if lot size allows.

5. Use fine mesh metal screen (1/4" or less) to cover eaves, roof and foundation vents to prevent windblown embers from entering.

6. Inspect and clean your chimney every year. Trim away branches within 10 feet. Install a spark arrester with 1/2" or smaller mesh screen.

7. Got a propane tank? Get rid of any flammable materials within 10 feet of it and, if possible, position it at least 30 feet from any structures.

8. Window screens should be metal, not plastic or other flammable or meltable material.

Defensible Space Zone (100 feet or more distance) • Keep this area lean and green!

- Remove—dead and dying grass, shrubs and trees.
- Reduce—the density of vegetation (fuel) and ladder fuels, those fuels extending from the ground to the tree canopies.
- Replace—hazardous vegetation with less flammable, irrigated landscape vegetation including lawns, or other low growing groundcover and flowering plants.

Find out more ways to make your home fire safe: www.DiabloFireSafe.org

Home Ignition Zone (The home plus 10 ft distance)

It’s the ‘little things’ that will endanger your home. Just a little ember landing on a little pile of flammable material will burn it. Send a morning searching out and getting rid of those flammable little things outside and your home will be much safer.

- 1/2" mesh screen

Home Ignition Zone 1

- Home Ignition Zone

Home Ignition Zone 2

- Defensible Space Zone

Defensible Space Zone (100 feet or more distance) • Keep this area lean and green!

- Remove—dead and dying grass, shrubs and trees.
- Reduce—the density of vegetation (fuel) and ladder fuels, those fuels extending from the ground to the tree canopies.
- Replace—hazardous vegetation with less flammable, irrigated landscape vegetation including lawns, or other low growing groundcover and flowering plants.

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