

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; this can include lounge cushions, papers or anything flammable outside your home. Also consider slope, prevailing winds, vegetation type and density, and exposure to direct sun.

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. 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 Forestry & Fire Protection (CDF) 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 CDF unit.
- The Department of Fish & Game should be notified and consulted if work occurs near a river, stream, lake, or tributaries. Go to: www.dfg.ca.gov/1600/1600.html
- Before cutting down trees, residents should check local association and special district regulations.

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 material that doesn'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 decking 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. If your home is located **on or near** the top of a slope and/or **receives constant or unusually strong winds** you must increase the *defensible space* in Zones 2 and 3 by a multiplication of 1.5 (**X-Factor**). For instance, in Zone 2, increase the *defensible space* from 100 feet to 150 feet.



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.

A Homeowner's Guide to Fire Safe Landscaping



Grassland

The Diablo FireSafe Council serves as a resource and catalyst for bringing together residents and agencies in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. Science tells us the East Bay has ideal conditions for recurring wildfires. While we cannot stop the next devastating wildfire from occurring in our communities, we can prepare for a wildfire event to help reduce potential damage and speed recovery.



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DIABLO FIRESAFE COUNCIL

The Diablo FireSafe Council offers the following services as funds permit:

- Community organizing
- Education/speakers
- Chipping services/fuel reduction
- Red Flag Program

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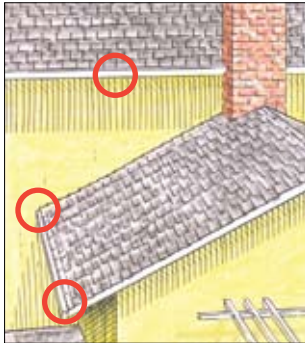
The DFSC is a 510(c)(3) non-profit; your donations are tax deductible. See our website for membership information and our latest meeting schedule. Thank you!

Home Ignition Zone

(The home plus 10 ft distance)

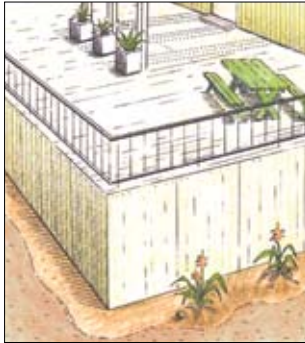
It's the 'little things' that will endanger your home. Just a little ember landing on a little pile of flammable material will burn it. Spend a morning searching out and getting rid of those flammable little things outside and your home will be much safer.

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.

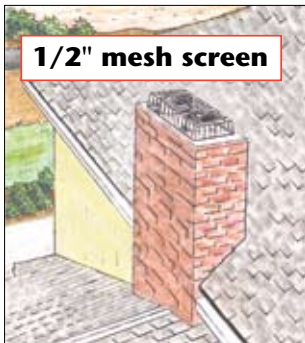
3. Clear all flammable materials from your deck. This includes brooms, stacked wood and easily ignitable patio furniture. Also enclose or board up the area under your deck to keep it from becoming a fuel bed for hot embers.



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.

Burning embers landing on wood shake roofs are one of the leading risk factors for losing your home to a wildfire. If possible, replace wood shingle roofs with non-flammable (Class-A) roofing materials, such as asphalt shingles, tile or metal roofing.

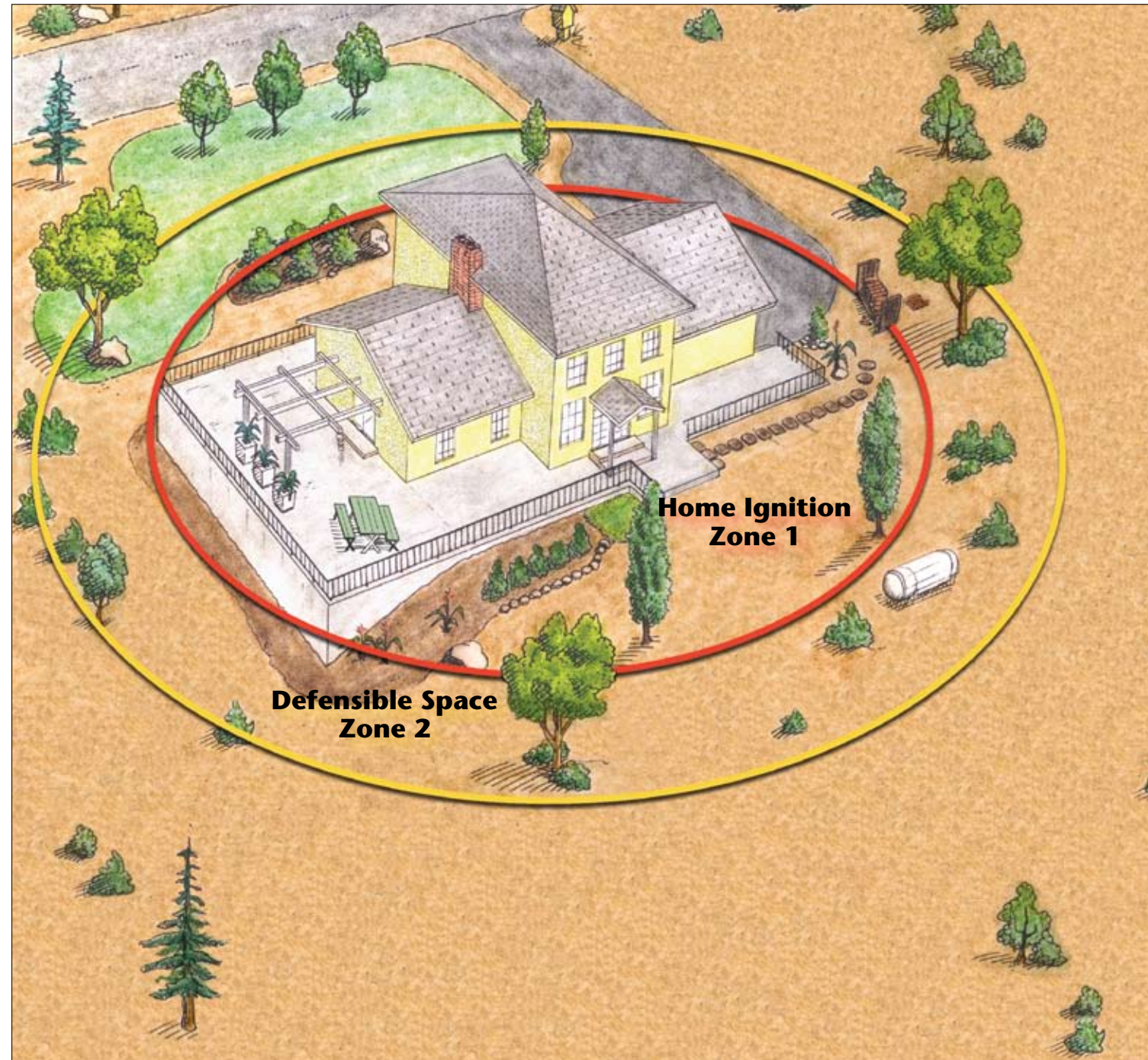
Defensible Space Zone (100 feet or more distance) • Keep this area lean and green!

Your "defensible space" is the area that is a minimum of 100 feet from your home (as required under State Public Resources Code 4291 or other local ordinances). This is the area where you've modified the landscaping to allow your house to survive on its own—greatly improving the odds for firefighters who are defending your home.

If your home is on a slope or subject to high winds, extend the distance of this zone based upon the "X-Factor." For instance, this zone may increase, then, to 150 feet (1.5 X 100 feet).

Create a *Defensible Space Zone* by keeping in mind the three R's of defensible space:

- **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 lawn, or other low growing groundcovers and flowering plants.



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

Are you doing the right thing—the wrong way?

Getting rid of the hazards around your home is a good idea—but you need to do it properly or you could accidentally start a wildland fire.

Each year fire departments respond to thousands of fires started by people using equipment the wrong way. Whether working to create defensible space around your home, just mowing dry grass, or pulling your dirt bike over to the side of the road, if you live in a wildland area you need to use all equipment responsibly.

Lawnmowers, weed eaters, chainsaws, grinders, welders, tractors and trimmers can all spark a wildland fire. Do your part, the right way, to keep your community fire safe.



Here's how to do it the RIGHT WAY:

- Mow before 10 a.m. If it's too hot for you, it's too hot to mow. **REMEMBER, DON'T MOW DURING THE HEAT OF THE DAY OR WHEN THE WIND IS BLOWING!**
- **Beware**—Lawn mowers are designed to mow lawns, not dry grass, weeds or rocks! A grass-hidden rock is enough to start a fire when struck by a metal blade. Remove rocks from the area before you begin mowing.
- **In wildland areas**, spark arresters are required on all portable gasoline powered equipment. This includes tractors, harvesters, chainsaws, weed eaters and mowers.
- Keep the exhaust system, spark arresters and mower in proper working order and free of carbon buildup. Use the recommended grade of fuel and don't top off.
- **In wildland areas**, grinding and welding operations require a permit plus 10 feet of clearance, a 46-inch round point shovel, and a backpack watertype fire extinguisher—all ready to use.
- Hot exhaust pipes and mufflers can start fires you won't even see—until it's too late! Don't drive your vehicle onto dry grass or brush.
- Keep a cell phone nearby and call 911 **immediately** in case of fire.