



WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS UPDATE

Over the last five years, California has experienced an average of over 5,000 wildland fires per year, burning an average of over 800,000 acres a year. In just the past two years, wildfires in California have caused at least \$3.2 billion in damage.

The recent wildfires in Ventura and Los Angeles County have underscored the urgent need for property owners to re-evaluate their parcel(s) and further harden their structures against the threat of wildfire. Defensible space is not just clearing the grass and weeds beyond your landscaped yard. It involves choosing fire resistant plants that thrive in California's dry climate and wisely placing them around your structures. Fire smart landscaping can increase your chances of surviving the next wildfire.

****Effective March 1, 2025, VCFD has implemented a full 5-foot Non-Combustible "Zone-0" for *New Buildings* and *Additions* to *Existing Buildings* located in SRA FHSZs and LRA Very High FHSZ. This means, all fuels, which includes any combustible materials and vegetation, are prohibited in Zone-0 for all new buildings, additions to existing buildings, installation of new landscape, and refurbishment of existing landscape areas.**

NOTE: Recent laws have passed that will require **ALL existing structures** located in any SRA FHSZs and LRA Very High FHSZ, to be in compliance with State mandated Zone-0 requirements by January 1, 2029.

****Now is the time to start preparing your home.**

DEFENSIBLE SPACE: This is the buffer zone you create between your property and the surrounding wildland area. This space is key to slowing or stopping wildfire spread and protecting your home from embers, flames, or heat. It also gives firefighters a safer area to defend your property.

The 100-ft defensible space is broken into the following zones:

- **Zone 0** – This zone extends 0-5 feet from your building or deck. This area is the most vulnerable and should be more aggressively maintained for fire resistance. When embers land in this area, they ignite any combustible material which in turn can ignite your home.
- **Zone 1** – This zone extends 5-30 feet from your home, remove any dead vegetation and debris and maintain spacing between shrubs and trees.
- **Zone 2** – This zone extends 30-100 feet from your home and fuels need to be further reduced in this zone. Create groupings of vegetation no larger than 500 sf and separate them with at least 10-ft of clear space until the next grouping. This will slow down the spread and intensity of fire as it approaches your structure.
- **Plant Spacing** – Proper plant spacing will slow down the fire's ability to spread, reduce the amount of heat being generated, and drop the height of the flames down lower to the ground where they are less intense and more manageable.
- **Italian Cypress & Palm Trees** – Consider removing these variety of trees especially if planted within 30-ft of structures.
- **Maintenance** – Year-round maintenance will reduce your risk.
- **Fencing** – We recommend replacing any combustible fencing with a non-combustible type within 5-ft of structures. (Vinyl fencing is **not** non-combustible)
- **Chimneys** – Should have a spark arrestor. Keep tree branches trimmed at least 10-ft away.

For more information on
DEFENSIBLE SPACE
scan here:



HOME HARDENING: The term refers to taking proactive measures to reduce a home's vulnerability to wildfire by either direct flame, radiant heat, or flying embers. Proper defensible space in combination with home hardening significantly increases your homes' chances of survival.

- **Roofs** – Class A: Composite, metal, clay or tile, resist fire and embers. Close off gaps under roof tiles and shingles to block wind-blown embers. Regularly clear leaves, pine needles, and debris.
- **Vents** – Install 1/16" to 1/8" noncombustible, corrosion resistant metal mesh over vents to block embers.
- **Windows** – Dual pane with at least one tempered glass layer to withstand radiant heat.
- **Chimneys** – Should have a spark arrestor. Keep tree branches trimmed at least 10-ft away.

INSURANCE DISCOUNTS: What can be done to reduce my insurance premiums?

- **Fire Risk Reduction Recognition** – VCFD is one of 50 agencies, counties and cities across the state that qualified for the designation, recognizing best practices in fire risk planning. Being on that list is one of two community-level fire mitigation measures insurance companies must consider when setting rates.
- **Firewise USA Community** – The other measure is becoming a designated Firewise USA Community. This is a group of residents who work together to reduce wildfire risks through education, planning, and action to create fire-adapted neighborhoods.

FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES (FHSZ): California has 3 classifications that indicate the likelihood of wildfires in specific areas, categorized as **Moderate, High, or Very High**. These zones are determined by factors such as fire history, vegetation, weather conditions, and topography to help inform property owners and builders about wildfire risks and necessary safety measures.

****Effective March 10, 2025, Cal Fire Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) issued the 2025 Recommended Local Responsibility Area (LRA) FHSZ maps for Ventura County. Ventura County Fire Department is not proposing any additions or increases to the maps during the adoption process. These new LRA FHSZ will be effective July 1, 2025**

REAL ESTATE INSPECTIONS: A seller of real property located in a High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone shall provide the buyer with documentation stating the property is in compliance with defensible space requirements.

For more information on
HOME HARDENING
scan here:



For more information on
**RISK REDUCTION and
FIREWISE** scan here:



For more information on
**FIRE HAZARD
SEVERITY ZONES**
scan here:



For more information on
**REAL ESTATE
INSPECTIONS** scan here:



For additional information regarding
wildfire preparedness, please visit the
VCFD Wildfire Preparedness Division

