



## Wildfire Safety

*Courtesy of the International Code Council (ICC)*

The 2005 wildfire season has begun. Is your property ready? To help you prepare, the International Code Council offers the following recommendations.



**Time to do that yard work.** Your yard can be your first, best stand against a wildfire. You can keep a fire from getting anywhere near the house itself with some simple landscaping and maintenance.

Look around your yard. See those areas where leaves collect? Those are the same places where the wind will carry burning embers during a wildfire.



You can create a defensible space against wildfires. Rake and remove leaves. Clear dead brush and dense vegetation. Store your firewood pile and other things that burn easily at least 30 feet to 100 feet away from the house.

Extra Tip: To keep sparks and flames from getting underneath, screen under your porch and other open areas with wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch.



**Check your landscaping.** When landscaping around your property, choose plants with high moisture content. They are more fire-resistant and can help to create a firebreak around your home.

Mow your grass and control the height and spread of ground covering vegetation. Keep plants at least 12 to 18 inches away from the house.



Trees and shrubs are fine, if well spaced, watered and properly pruned. Remove dead or low-hanging branches. Make sure to cut all tree limbs around your chimney and any dead branches that hang over your roof. And, keep an eye on any limbs that may come in contact with power lines.

Keep your gutters, eaves and roof clear of leaves and other debris.



**What about other structures?** Decks, porches, fences and out buildings should be considered part of your home. They need as much attention as the house itself. Keep wildfire safety in mind when making improvements to such structures.

Fences act like fuses or fuel bridges. They can lead a fire right to your home. A combustible wood fence attached to your house greatly increases the house's potential to ignite. Keep combustible vegetation away from fencing. Consider fire-resistant fencing or placing fencing away from structures when making improvements.

A trellis touching or close to the house can have a similar risk if it is made of a combustible material or covered with combustible vegetation.



A patio deck can be hazardous in a wildfire, especially when combustible materials and debris accumulate beneath it. Clear debris below the patio deck and create a defensible space around it.

Fire can travel uphill extremely quickly. Elevated wooden decks built on hillsides can be especially hazardous because they are in the direct line of a fire moving up the slope. When putting on a new patio deck, build from fire-resistant materials. On new and existing decks, create fire barriers around the deck base and clear vegetation at least 100 to 300 feet downhill from the deck base.



These simple, low-cost solutions can provide an additional level of protection to your home.

However, in case of wildfire, if an evacuation is ordered, leave as soon as possible. Return home only after authorities say that it is safe to do so.



## Tips for Building in Areas Prone to Wildfires

*Courtesy of the International Code Council (ICC)*

When rebuilding after a wildfire, or when protecting an existing home from wildfire danger, property owners can benefit by building to codes developed to protect lives and property where wildfires are likely. While the International Code Council does not advocate building in areas that are prone to wildfires, those who elect to do so need an advantage.

### Low or no cost tips

- Create a defensible space around structures—30 to 100 feet away from the structure depending on exposure to natural vegetation areas. Approximate cost: \$0 if you do it yourself; labor costs if you hire out the job.
- Move combustible materials, such as wood piles, away from structures. \$0 if you do it yourself; labor costs if you hire out the job.
- Thin out ornamental shrubs and bushes; remove dead vegetation. \$0 if you do it yourself; labor costs if you hire out the job.
- Cut back dead or dying tree limbs, especially those that overhang the roof, and all vegetation within 10 feet of a chimney. \$0 if you do it yourself; labor costs if you hire out the job.
- Mow grass and cut back low-to-ground vegetation (ivy, vines, weeds) to three to six inches high. \$0 if you do it yourself; labor costs if you hire out the job.
- Keep 12 to 18 inches of bare ground between structures and grasses or other vegetation. \$0 if you do it yourself; labor costs if you hire out the job.
- Keep areas around the home clear so emergency vehicles have easy access. No cost.
- Ask your local building or fire department about developing a fire protection plan. No cost.

### Affordable and higher cost tips

- Fire-retardant roof materials such as tile or roof coverings identified as Class A or steel. Approximate cost over traditional roofing materials: \$2,500 (based on a two-story, 2,000 sq. ft. home).
- Tempered or multiple pane windows to reduce heat and protect against wind and debris that can break windows and allow fire to enter the home. Approximate cost: about 20% more than non-tempered or single pane windows.
- Residential fire sprinkler systems to extinguish fire that may enter the home and prevent structural fires from spreading to the wildland. Approximate cost \$1.50 - \$2 per sq. ft. (\$3,000-\$4,000 based on a two-story, 2,000 sq. ft. home).
- Fire-resistant building materials for exterior walls or siding. Approximate cost: \$9,000 (based on a two-story, 2,000 sq. ft. home with brick veneer).

All costs are approximate, may not include labor and may vary due to local economic conditions.

