

Here's How to Get Started: Create a Firewise 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. 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 through the Defensible Space Zone.

Step Three

Develop a plan for correcting any firewise problems identified in steps one and two. Consider completing your work prior to June 1st 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 am. 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 CDF at 530/538-7111.
 - The Department of Fish & Game should be notified and consulted if work occurs near a river, stream, lake, or tributaries. Call 916/358-2900, or look on the web at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/1600/1600.html>
 - Before cutting down trees, residents of Paradise should review 1998 Town of Paradise Tree Preservation Ordinance 301, Section 2; and also the Paradise Municipal Code, Section 8.50.160.

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, 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. For information on the Community Chipper Program, sponsored by the Butte County Fire Safe Council, phone 530/877-0984.

Step Seven

Continue to monitor and evaluate the firewise 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.

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For more information:



Butte County Fire Safe Council
767 Birch Street
Paradise, CA 95969
phone: 530/877-0984
www.ButteFireSafe.org

Contact your local fire department for guidance in making your home and property firewise, defensible space regulations and burn permits:

- California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection/ Butte County Fire Department; also serving the cities of Biggs and Gridley; 530/538-7111
<http://www.ButteFire.com> • <http://www.fire.ca.gov>
- Paradise Fire Department; 530/872-6265
<http://www.TownOfParadise.com>
- Chico Fire Department; 530/895-4930
http://www.ci.chico.ca.us/fire/home_Page.asp
- Oroville Fire Department; 530/538-2487
<http://www.CityOfOroville.org/Fire/FireDepartment.html>

On the Web:

- <http://www.ButteFireSafe.org>
Home site for the Butte County Fire Safe Council
- <http://www.firewise.org>
National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program
- <http://ceres.ca.gov/foreststeward>
California Forest Stewardship
- <http://www.tree-pruning.com>
Information on tree pruning techniques
- <http://www.fire.ca.gov>
California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection; includes forest management information
- <http://www.firesafecouncil.org>
California State Fire Safe Council

Other references:

- *Will Your Home Survive?* by R.D. Harell and William Teie (Deer Valley Press, 2001); 800/455-1950
- *California Wildfire Landscaping; How To Comply With the High Fire Hazard Law* by Maureen Gilmer (Taylor Publishing, 1994)
- *Sunset Western Landscaping Guide* (Sunset Publishing, 1997)
- *Pruning Mature Trees*
International Society of Arboriculture
P.O. Box 3129, Champaign, IL 61826
- Contact your local community or property owners' association for landscaping guidelines and applicable CC&Rs

A Homeowner's Guide to Firewise Landscaping in Butte County



Grassland



Produced by the Butte County Fire Safe Council. Our mission is to "provide education, exchange information and foster fire prevention and fire safety within the County of Butte."

www.ButteFireSafe.org

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 Butte County 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 "firewise."

A firewise property is one where the home and landscape resist the impact of fire. A firewise 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 firewise.

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. Homes in the grassland are often subject to periodic strong northerly and southerly winds during the fire season. Under these circumstances, you must increase the *defensible space* in Zone 2 by a multiplication of 1.5 (**X-Factor**). For instance, in Zone 2, increase the *defensible space* from 30 feet to 45 feet.



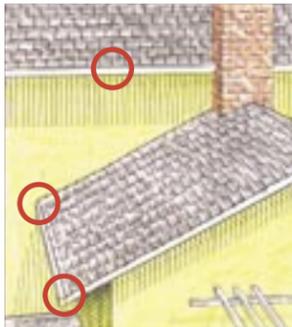
During the summer and fall months, a combination of low humidity, high temperatures and strong winds results in a "red flag" weather warning. During such a condition, the fire danger is very high. The X-Factor explained above helps provide that extra margin of *defensible space* necessary to keep your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

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.

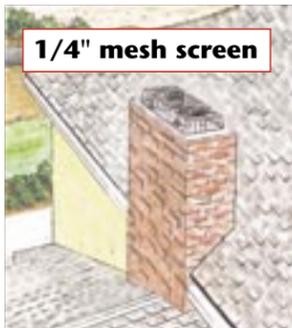
3. Clear all flammable materials from your deck. This includes brooms, stacked wood and easily ignitable patio furniture. Also enclose or board up the area under your deck to keep it from becoming a fuel bed for hot embers.



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 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 1/4" 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.

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.

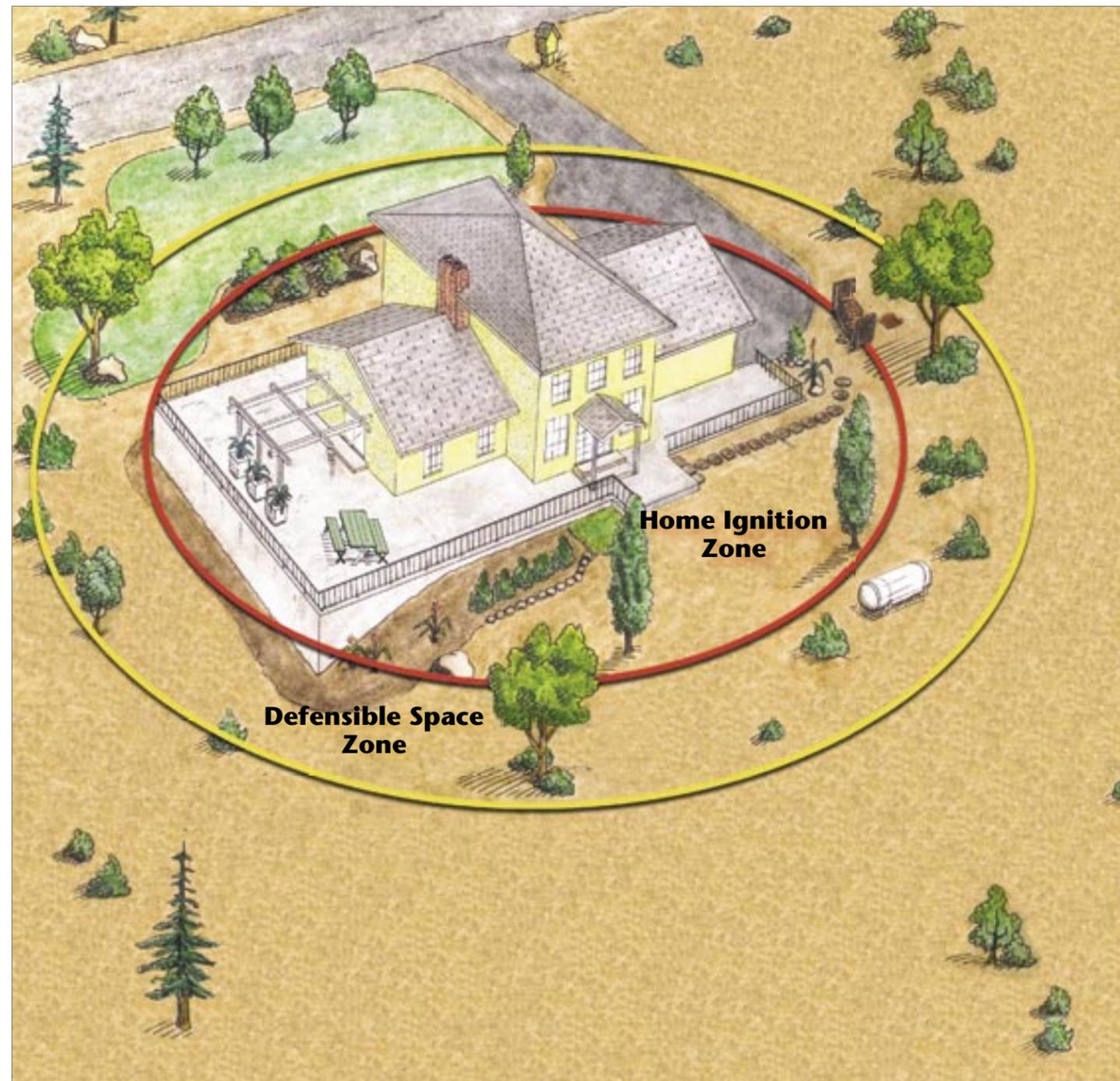
Defensible Space Zone (minimum of 30 feet distance) • Keep this area lean and green!

Your "defensible space" is the area out to about 30 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." This zone may increase, then, to 45 feet (1.5 X 30 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.ButteFireSafe.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 CDF responds to nearly 1,500 fires started by Californians 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 am. 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.