



# How To Prepare Your Home for an Evaluation

The Wildfire Prepared Home designation program enables homeowners to take preventative measures for their home and yard to protect against wildfire. This checklist will guide you through required actions to help protect your home and receive a designation certificate.

## Eligibility

- The applicant must be the owner of the 3-story or less, single-family detached home (no townhomes or condos).
- The home must be located in California.
- A 5-foot noncombustible buffer must surround the home. Photos submission are required for eligibility.

### NOTE:

- Designation certificate requirements are stringent. Tree requirements may disqualify some homes, and some homeowners may have to work with neighbor(s) to meet the requirements.
- One of the most stringent required actions is creating a 5-foot noncombustible buffer around your home and decks. **ALL** vegetation, trees including overhanging branches, grass/turf, wood/rubber mulch, wood/vinyl fencing, and any stored items within 5 feet of your home must have been removed. Your home will not receive the designation certificate without meeting the requirements.

## Examples of eligible homes with a 5-foot noncombustible buffer



## Designation Certificate Levels

We offer two solutions. To receive a designation certificate, your home must meet **all** requirements listed for the desired level.

1. **Wildfire Prepared Home Base** — This group of required actions includes creating a 5-foot home buffer, preparing the home's exterior, and maintaining the deck/covered porch and yard, **typically achieved through retrofits** to existing homes.
2. **Wildfire Prepared Home Plus** — This group of required actions builds upon *Wildfire Prepared Home Base* to add an extra layer of home protection, **commonly achieved with newer home construction** or after exterior home renovations.

## Process & Timing

<b>Step 1:</b>	<b>DIY PREP:</b> Homeowner completes work using this How-To Prepare Your Home Checklist.	<b>Timing:</b> Weeks to months, depending on the extent of the work required.
<b>Step 2:</b>	<b>PAY &amp; SUBMIT:</b> Pay \$125 nonrefundable, application fee and submit eligibility photos.	<b>Timing:</b> 5-10 minutes.
<b>Step 3:</b>	<p><b>EVALUATION:</b> A 3<sup>rd</sup> party evaluator will document areas where the work is complete.</p> <p><i>Note: They do not attempt to inspect/document every deficiency to tell a homeowner what to do. The designation is an owner driven process, so it is the homeowner's responsibility to follow the guidance and mitigate their house.</i></p>	<b>Timing:</b> Typically, evaluations occur 30+ days. This can fluctuate based on location, weather, and # of applicants.
<b>Step 4:</b>	<b>QA REVIEW:</b> Experts will conduct a thorough review to determine the designation certificate level achieved.	<b>Timing:</b> One to two weeks.
<b>Step 5:</b>	<b>DESIGNATION:</b> If the home meets all requirements, you will be notified via email with a certificate. If there is more work to complete, you will have 90 days to complete the work and submit photos.	<b>Timing:</b> Within one week.

NOTE: If there are additional required actions to be completed after an evaluation, the full process can take 60+ days.

## Maintenance & Renewal

### Annual Review

- Once a designation certificate has been issued, an annual maintenance review is required. This ensures vegetation doesn't creep into the 5-foot noncombustible buffer and crucial upkeep of vegetation is maintained within 5-30 feet.
- We offer 2 solutions:
  - Self-evaluation with photos provided by the homeowner for \$25.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> party exterior home evaluation for \$100.

### 3-Year Recertification

- After 3 years, recertification is required to keep the designation certificate active. Homeowners can use their portal log in to apply for a new home evaluation to verify program requirements have been maintained.

## Definitions

Within this standard, acceptable products and materials are those listed by the California State Fire Marshal or in a current report issued by an approved agency (accredited to ISO 17065) to meet one of the following test standards:

- **Noncombustible** – Made from material of which no part will ignite and burn when subjected to fire. Any material passing ASTM E136 is considered noncombustible.
- **Ignition-resistant** – A type of building material that resists ignition or sustained flaming combustion sufficiently to reduce losses from wildland-urban interface conflagrations under worst-case weather and fuel conditions with wildfire exposure of embers and small flames. Ignition-resistant building materials must comply with one of the following:
  - Extended ASTM E84 (UL 723) test or ASTM E2768
  - Noncombustible material

NOTE: An ignition-resistant material should not be confused with ignition-resistant construction as ignition-resistant construction can include combustible materials in the assembly, and inclusion of combustible materials in the assembly does not comply with the Wildfire Prepared Home Plus designation standard.

# Wildfire Prepared Home Base Designation

To receive a designation certificate, your home must meet all requirements listed for this level. This group of required actions includes creating a 5-foot home buffer, preparing the home's exterior, and maintaining the deck/covered porch and yard, **typically achieved through retrofits to existing homes.**

## CREATE A 5-FOOT HOME BUFFER

### 1. Create a 5-foot noncombustible buffer around your home and decks.

#### Remove ALL vegetation, trees including overhanging branches, grass/turf, wood/rubber mulch, and any stored items within 5 feet.

- Remove all vegetation and combustible ground covers such as mulch within 5 feet of your home.
- Trim back branches that overhang the 5-foot area; the home buffer extends to the sky.
- Do not allow vines to grow on buildings, fences, or within 5 feet of the building.
- Install 5 feet of hard groundcover material such as bare dirt, gravel, pavers, river rocks, DG base, steppingstones, or concrete including the 5 feet surrounding decks/covered porches, under and around the stairs.

**Tips:** Use a measuring tape from the base of the walls and deck to measure out to 5 feet. If you have a covered porch, it should be measured out to 5 feet from the cover, including vertical supports that hold up the structure. Some homeowners may have to work with neighbor(s) to meet the requirements of this 5-foot buffer zone.

#### Replace combustible fencing within 5 feet.

- Replace any wood/vinyl fencing, posts, and gates located within 5 feet of the home with a noncombustible fence, such as metal (aluminum or chain link).

#### Maintain the 5-foot noncombustible buffer area regularly.

- Routinely clear tree debris, weeds, grass, and dead plant material.
- Do not park or store any vehicles, boats, RVs, trailers, or ATVs within 5 feet of the home. Ideally, store these items in a closed garage or park them at least 30 feet away from the home.
- Do not store anything combustible such as firewood, potted plants, outdoor furniture, trash cans, pet houses, lawn tools, sheds, hot tubs, or children's playsets, in this zone.

## PREPARE YOUR HOME

### 2. Check and maintain your roof and gutters.

- Regularly clear all tree debris from your roof and gutters.
- Replace a wood shake/shingle roof with a Class A fire-rated roof cover such as asphalt shingles, tile, slate, or metal roofs. Tile and some metal must also include bird stops at the edges, to prevent intrusion under the tile by birds or other wildlife.
- Replace plastic or vinyl gutters with metal gutters such as aluminum or steel.



*During a wildfire, embers can travel miles ahead of a fire front and accumulate at the base of your home's exterior walls and within the first 5 feet. By implementing a buffer zone, you significantly reduce the chances of your home being ignited by wildfire.*



*Combustible fences when ignited can provide a pathway for fire to reach your home.*

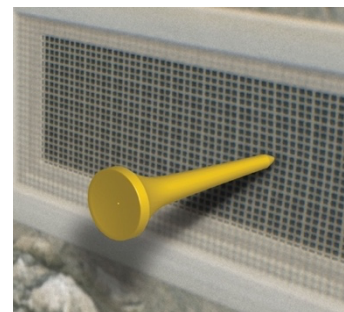
### 3. Install ember-resistant vents.

- Install ember-resistant vents or cover all existing vents with 1/8-inch metal wire mesh.
- Ensure your dryer vent has a louver or flap to reduce ember entry. Due to its design and function, wire mesh should not be used on dryer vents.

*Note: Plumbing vents are excluded from these requirements.*

#### Vent Tips

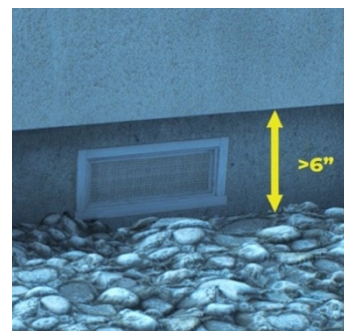
- o Check your current vent mesh size using a golf tee or the tip of a pen. If the tee does not fit through the mesh openings, it is the correct size.
- o You can cover your current vents by installing the 1/8-inch metal mesh from the inside or outside.



*Wind-blown embers can enter your home through vents in your attic, roof, gables, and crawlspace and ignite materials inside.*

### 4. Ensure a 6-inch vertical clearance on exterior walls.

- Ensure there is a minimum of 6 vertical inches (measured from the ground up and from any attached horizontal surface like a deck) of noncombustible siding material around your home, such as fiber-cement, brick, stone, stucco, or exposed concrete foundation.



*Embers accumulate against homes at the base of exterior walls and on other horizontal surfaces like decks that can ignite the home.*

## MAINTAIN DECKS & YARD 5 TO 30 FEET

### 5. Clear and maintain decks and covered porches.

#### On top of the deck or on the porch:

- Regularly clear all tree debris.
- Remove large rugs and combustible wood, wicker, or plastic furniture.
- Only include noncombustible cast aluminum or metal furniture and up to 10 noncombustible terra cotta or ceramic planters (with small flowers or plants, no woody vegetation, or trees).
- Ensure items like cushions or door mats are small enough to easily be moved inside on Red Flag days.
- Hot tubs on a noncombustible patio must be 10 feet from the home. Remove hot tubs from underneath a covered porch and combustible decks.

#### Underneath the deck:

- Remove anything stored under the deck or stairs.
- Remove all vegetation—including grass or weeds—from under the deck and stairs.
- Include a 5-foot noncombustible buffer around deck and stairs.
- Additionally, for decks with a walking surface at a height of 4 feet or less from the ground, enclose the area underneath with one of the following:



For low decks, enclose the area underneath to keep debris and embers out which can easily ignite a deck from underneath.

- Install 1/8-inch or finer metal wire mesh around the outer edge of the walking surface extending to the ground, **or**
- Install a noncombustible wall covering.



*Decks attached to or built near your home provide a path for fire to reach your home. Reducing or eliminating the vulnerabilities of a deck or porch—including items on top of or underneath—reduces the chance your home ignites.*

**For decks with an additional structure (like a pergola, gazebo, or hot tub), the following must be met:**

- Remove combustible structures such as a pergola or gazebo from decks or replace with noncombustible material such as metal.
- Remove hot tubs from combustible decks.
- Remove all vegetation such as vines and any curtains/drapes/screens.

*Note: Detached decks within 30 feet of the home must meet the same requirements as attached decks.*

**6. Maintain the yard, trees, and structures from 5 to 30 feet.**

**Maintain the yard**

- Cut grass to no more than 4 inches and keep watered.
- Routinely clear tree debris such as leaves and pine needles.
- Remove dead vegetation, including piles from pruning. Firewood should be stored 30 feet from any structures.

**Trim trees**

- Remove tree branches less than 6 feet above the ground.
- Trim upper branches of trees to ensure at least 10 feet of space between the canopies of neighboring trees.

**Shrubs**

- Choose low-growing, fire-resistant plants.
- Relocate any shrubs located under or near trees.
- Keep low-growing bushes and shrubs spaced apart or in small groupings (no more than 3 shrubs or a maximum of 10 feet wide and 10 feet apart from other plantings) that will result in a discontinuous path of vegetation.
- Remove any hedges or rows of bushes that will create more fuel and a pathway for fire to reach your home.

**Maintain structures within 30 feet of your home (i.e., sheds, hot tubs, pergolas, and playsets)**

- Place structures **at least 10 feet away** from the home or any attached decks.
- Create a 5-foot noncombustible buffer around and under each structure.
- Clear all vegetation such as vines growing on and tree branches overhanging these structures.
- Ensure there is a minimum of 6 vertical inches (measured from the ground) of noncombustible siding material at the base of each structure or any horizontal surfaces, such as a hot tub, just as you would for your home. For an elevated structure like a shed, enclose the base with no larger than 1/8-inch or finer metal wire mesh.
- If you have multiple structures, such as a shed, hot tub, and playset, ensure these structures are spaced at least 10 feet apart. Have at most 3 of these structures within 30 feet of your home.
- Move large stationary propane tanks to 30 feet away from the home. If there is not an option to move the tank 30 feet from your home, it should be placed a minimum of 10 feet from the home and one of the following:
  - Buried underground.
  - Enclosed on all 4 sides with concrete block, 1/8-inch mesh over the top for ventilation, and 5-feet of noncombustible groundcover surrounding the structure.\*  
\*This is a suggestion, retrofit in coordination with your propane provider.

Note: Best practice is to place structures 30+ feet away from your home. To meet the Plus level designation, it is required to have all structures placed at least 30 feet from the home.

## How-to Prepare Your Home Checklist

# Wildfire Prepared Home Plus Designation

This group of actions builds upon *Wildfire Prepared Home Base* to add an extra layer of home protection, commonly achieved with newer home construction or after exterior home renovations. To receive a designation certificate for Plus, your home must meet all requirements listed for Wildfire Prepared Home Base **plus all** the following additional requirements.

Note: The exception is for *structures*. To meet the Plus level designation, it is required to have all structures placed at least 30 feet from the home or have them removed completely.

## UPGRADE YOUR HOME'S EXTERIOR

### 1. Enclose underside of eaves.

- Install noncombustible or ignition-resistant soffit material, such as fiber-cement board or 2-inch nominal or thicker lumber.
- NOTE: If venting the enclosed eaves, soffit vents should be ember-resistant or include 1/8-inch or finer metal wire mesh.

### 2. Cover gutters.

- Install noncombustible gutter guards to keep tree debris out.

### 3. Install a noncombustible dryer vent.

- Install a metal dryer vent, which includes louvers or a flap.

### 4. Move structures 30 feet from your home (*i.e., sheds, hot tubs pergolas, and playsets*).

- Move structures at least 30 feet away from your home or remove them completely.

### 5. Upgrade windows and doors.

#### Windows:

- Replace all exterior windows with tempered, multipaned glass (at least 2 panes tempered) or fire-resistant glass blocks.
- Replace domed, plastic skylights with flat, multipaned, tempered glass skylights.

#### Doors:

- Upgrade to solid exterior doors that have a metal threshold and are constructed with a noncombustible or ignition-resistant material such as metal, fiberglass, or solid hardwood.
- If you choose a door that includes glass, make sure it is made with tempered, multipaned glass.
- Alternatively, install a noncombustible storm door to cover the existing door. These are fire-resistant.

### 6. Install noncombustible siding and shutters.

- Replace combustible or ignition-resistant constructed siding that includes wood, engineered wood-fiber, or vinyl siding with a noncombustible or ignition-resistant material such as fiber-cement board, stucco, brick, metal, or stone veneer.
- Replace combustible decorative shutters, with noncombustible shutters.



Because of their geometry, radiant heat can build up in an open eave and ignite exposed materials. Flames from nearby fuels such as a shed or vegetation can also ignite eaves.



During a wildfire, windows and doors are susceptible to heat and flames. Upgrading windows and doors can help keep flames from entering and igniting materials inside the home.

## 7. Enclose under bay windows.

- Enclose any open area underneath a ground floor bay window with an exterior wall and noncombustible siding.

## 8. Build or retrofit to a noncombustible deck.

*Note: Composite decking, plastic, fire retardant treated (FRT) wood, and dense hardwoods do not comply with the Wildfire Prepared Home **Plus** designation requirements.*

### **When building a new deck:**

- Construct all deck components with noncombustible materials and a solid walking surface.**

#### **Example materials:**

- Steel joists.
- Solid walking surface using lightweight concrete, autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC), tile, stone, or aluminum (made to look like wood).
- Railings using steel cable, steel rod, aluminum (made to look like wood), wrought iron, or glass.
- Stairs using steel risers with a solid walking surface using lightweight concrete, autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC), tile, stone, brick, or aluminum (made to look like wood).

### **When retrofitting an existing deck:**

(See noncombustible material examples above)

- Ensure the bottom 6 inches of deck posts and stairs are noncombustible.
- Replace the walking surface with a solid (no gap), noncombustible walking surface.
  - Decks with a walking surface at a height of 4 feet or less from the ground must be enclosed underneath with a noncombustible material such as 1/8-inch or finer metal mesh.
- Install noncombustible railings within the first 5 feet attached to the home.
- Replace the stair treads with a solid (no gaps), noncombustible walking surface.
  - Use the same noncombustible material as the walking surface with closed risers (back of walking surface).
  - Clear underneath stairs wider than 4 feet and enclose with noncombustible material such as 1/8-inch or finer metal mesh.

## 9. Remove back-to-back fencing.

- If you and your neighbor(s) have separate, parallel fences that are less than 5 feet apart, work with your neighbor to remove any sections of back-to-back fencing within 30 feet of the home.