

DEFENSIBLE SPACE/ HOME HARDENING HINTS

California's Wildfire Protection Laws: AB 3074 & SB 504

In response to escalating wildfire risks, California enacted **AB 3074 (2020)** and **SB 504 (2024)**, requiring homeowners to take specific fire-hardening measures:

- **AB 3074 (2020)**: Introduced the “**ember-resistant zone**”, requiring certain homeowners (in the highest risk wildfire zones according to the State Fire Marshal) to maintain a five-foot buffer (**Zone 0**) around their homes, free of flammable materials.
- **SB 504 (2024)**: Strengthened enforcement mechanisms, empowering fire departments to issue fines for noncompliance.

By adhering to these laws, homeowners can **significantly reduce the risk of wildfire damage** and contribute to a fire-resilient community. A State panel is developing the guidelines for Zone 0, which have not been finalized. Here is a draft version that does allow some vegetation within 5' of the home or deck:

https://bof.fire.ca.gov/media/54f1f1kr/wkshp-3-valachovic-presentation_ada.pdf

Creative Fireproofing Solutions for Zone 0

Retrofitting your home for wildfire resistance doesn't have to mean sacrificing aesthetics. There are innovative ways to **eliminate combustibles** while maintaining visual appeal:

Key Steps for Retrofitting Your Home's Exterior

1. Ember-Resistant Zone (0-5 Feet from Home)

- Remove all combustible materials such as mulch, dried leaves, and firewood. Before evacuation, remove wooden furniture and door mats.
- Replace plantings with crushed or smooth rock, brick or tile
- Cover wooden planters with tile or stone
- Use fire-resistant potted plants (not in plastic)
- Replace flammable landscaping (juniper, pine, bamboo, Scotch Broom) with fire-resistant plants like succulents or rock gardens.
- Use metal or **Class A** fire-rated roofing materials instead of wood shake shingles.

2. Fire-Resistant Siding and Walls

- Seal gaps and cracks in siding and foundations with fire-resistant caulking to prevent ember intrusion.
- Add aluminum “L” flashing (4”x6”) to the intersection of decks and siding

- Install (1/8" galvanized mesh) around the perimeter of decks to prevent embers from accumulating underneath.
- If you have the funds, consider replacing **wooden or vinyl siding** with non-combustible materials like fiber cement, stucco, or metal on the bottom 6" of the siding.

3. Defensible Space (5-100 Feet from Home)

- Maintain defensible space by **clearing dry vegetation** and trimming overhanging tree branches at least **10 feet** from roofs.
- Store firewood and propane tanks **at least 30 feet from structures**.
- Space trees **at least 10 feet apart** and keep grass mowed to **less than 4 inches**.

4. Fire-Resistant Windows and Doors

- If you have the funds, upgrade to **tempered glass windows**, which are more resistant to heat and flames.
- Install **metal mesh screens (1/16-inch to 1/8-inch)** on foundation vents to prevent embers from entering attics and crawl spaces.
- Use **non-combustible or fire-rated doors**, such as those made from metal or solid-core wood.

5. Roofing and Gutter Protection

- Opt for a **Class A fire-rated roof** (asphalt shingles, metal, clay, or concrete tiles).
- Install **metal drip edges** to protect exposed roof sheathing.
- Use metal screen **gutter guards** or keep gutters clean to prevent dry debris from catching embers.

6. Fire-Resistant Decking and Fencing

- Consider replacing **wooden decks with fire-rated composite materials or metal**.
- Use **metal fencing** near structures instead of wood, which can easily ignite.

7. Water Supply and Fire Tools

- Ensure easy access to a **water source**, such as an outdoor hose with a high-pressure nozzle.
- Keep **fire-resistant tools** (rake, shovel, and metal buckets) on hand for emergency use.