In 2020, wildfires burned more than 10 million acres in the U.S., according to the National Interagency Fire Center. In California alone, wildfires destroyed more than 10,000 structures and killed 31 people.

Creating a defensible space – a buffer between your property and the surrounding land – can slow or even stop the spread of wildfire and help minimize destruction to your home.

Consider the following to protect your home from wildfire:

**Immediate zone – 0-5’ surrounding and including the home**

* Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
* Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
* Ideally, the roof and exterior structure of your home should be made of non-combustible or fire-resistant materials such as tile, slate, sheet iron, aluminum, brick or stone.
* If your roof or siding is made of wood shingle or cedar shake, treat it with fire-resistant chemicals, or consider upgrading to fire-resistant materials.
* Clean debris from exterior attic and eaves vents and install 1/8 inch metal mesh screening to reduce embers.
* Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows.
* Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
* Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors – mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles – anything that can burn. Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.

###### **Intermediate zone – 5-30’**

* Clear vegetation from under large stationary propane tanks.
* Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways/paths, patios, and decks.
* Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of four inches.
* Remove vegetation under trees.
* Prune trees up to 6-10 feet from the ground, and for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.
* Space trees to have a minimum of 18 feet between tree crowns with the distance increasing with the percentage of slope.
* Plan tree placement to ensure the mature canopy is no closer than 10 feet to the edge of the structure.
* Tree and shrubs in this zone should be limited to small clusters.

###### **Extended zone – 30-100 feet, out to 200 feet**

* Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.
* Remove dead plant and tree material.
* Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.
* Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.
* Trees 30-60 feet from the home should have at least 12 feet between tops.
* Trees 60-100 feet from the home should have at least 6 feet between tops.

**Other steps you can take**
* Mark your address clearly on your home and at all roadway entrances to make it easier for emergency responders to find your home.
* Roads and driveways should ideally be at least 16 feet wide to provide easy access to fire trucks and other large vehicles.
* Have basic tools such as ladders, rakes, buckets and hoses available in good condition for fire crews.
* Check with your local fire department for any additional defensible space or weed abatement ordinances.
* To learn more, visit the [National Fire Protection Agency](https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire).

**For more information about insurance, call your AAA agent or visit your local branch.**