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

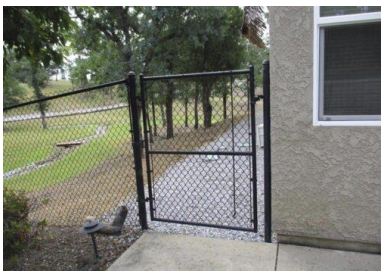
- The applicant must be the homeowner.
- Submission of photos is required for eligibility. Photos of all four sides of the home showing the 5-foot noncombustible buffer zone surrounding the home is required.
- The home must be a 3-story or less, single-family detached home (no townhomes or condos).
- The home must be located in California or Oregon.

NOTE:

- Designation certificate requirements are stringent. Protected trees may disqualify some homes, and some homeowners may have to work with neighbor(s) to meet the requirements within 5 feet due to setbacks.
- 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/artificial turf, wood/rubber mulch, wood/vinyl fencing, and any stored items within 5 feet of your home must have been removed.

Photos 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 typically achieved through retrofits to existing homes** — 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.
2. **Wildfire Prepared Home Plus commonly achieved with newer home construction or after exterior home renovations**— This group of required actions builds upon *Wildfire Prepared Home Base* to add an extra layer of home protection.

Process & Timing

Step 1:	**DIY HOME PREP:** Homeowner completes work using this How-To Prepare Your Home Checklist.	**Timing:** Weeks to months, depending on the extent of the work required.
Step 2:	**PAY & SUBMIT:** Pay the application fee and submit eligibility photos for review. **NOTE:** The $125 application fee is nonrefundable. Not every home will be eligible.	**Timing:** 5-10 minutes.
Step 3:	**QA REVIEW:** Photos of all four sides showing the 5-foot noncombustible buffer surrounding the home will be reviewed for eligibility.	**Timing:** Weeks to months, depending on the extent of the work required to pass eligibility.
Step 4:	**EVALUATION:** Once photos of eligibility are confirmed, a 3rd party evaluator will visit the home to document areas where the work is complete. *Note: The designation process is led by the homeowner, so it is essential for the homeowner to follow the guidance and address any actions for their home before the evaluation.*	**Timing:** Typically, evaluations occur 30+ days. This can fluctuate based on location, weather, and number of applicants.
Step 5:	**QA REVIEW:** Experts will conduct a thorough review to determine the designation certificate level achieved.	**Timing:** One to two weeks.
Step 6:	**DESIGNATION:** 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.	**Timing:** 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.
  - 3rd 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

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

*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 **5-foot noncombustible buffer** zone, you significantly reduce the chances of your home being ignited by wildfire.*

CREATE A 5-FOOT HOME BUFFER (0-5 FEET)

1. **Create a 5-foot noncombustible buffer around your home and decks.**
   - ☐ **Remove ALL vegetation** and combustible ground covers such as wood mulch within 5 feet of your home. This means all bushes, grass/artificial turf, flowers, trees, succulents, etc., down to bare dirt or hardscape.
   - ☐ **Remove trees and trim branches that overhang the 5-foot area**; the home buffer extends to the sky. Don't forget your deck too.
   - ☐ **Install hardscape:** Clear the 5 feet around your home including decks/covered porches, under and around the stairs to bare dirt. You may also, use hardscapes such as gravel, pavers, river rocks, DG base, steppingstones, or concrete to create an attractive noncombustible buffer zone.
   - ☐ **Replace combustible (wood/vinyl) fencing, posts, and gates within 5 feet of the home** with a noncombustible fence, such as metal (aluminum, chain link, or iron) or concrete blocks.
   - ☐ **Remove vines** from the home, pergolas, fences, and within 5 feet.
   - ☐ **Clear and maintain the 5-foot noncombustible buffer area.**
     - Clear tree debris, weeds, leaves, and grass regularly.
     - Do not park or store any vehicles, boats, RVs, trailers, or ATVs within 5 feet of the home. Ideally, relocate these stored items in a closed garage or park them at least 30 feet away from the home.
     - Remove all combustible items such as firewood, potted plants, outdoor furniture, trash cans, pet houses, lawn tools, sheds, hot tubs, etc., from this zone.

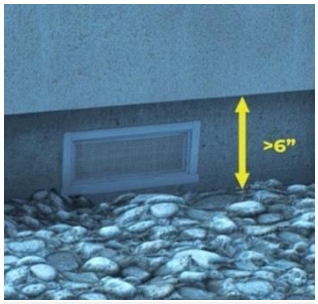
5-foot Home Buffer Tips:
- Use a measuring tape from the base of the walls and deck to measure out to 5 feet. If you have a covered porch, it should be measured out to 5 feet from the cover, including vertical supports.
- Homeowners with less than 5-feet of setback will have to work with neighbor(s) to create and maintain the 5-foot buffer zone.

***Wood and vinyl** fences when ignited can provide a pathway for fire to reach your home.*

PREPARE YOUR HOME'S EXTERIOR

2. **Check and maintain your roof and gutters.**
   - ☐ **Clear all tree debris from your roof and gutters** regularly.
   - ☐ **Replace a wood shake/shingle roof** with a Class A fire-rated roof cover such as asphalt shingles, tile, slate, or metal. Barrel 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/vinyl gutters** and downspouts with metal.

3. **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. This can include fiber-cement, brick, stone, stucco, or exposed concrete foundation. Additionally, metal flashing can be used above deck walking surfaces and posts.



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

4. **Install ember-resistant vents.**

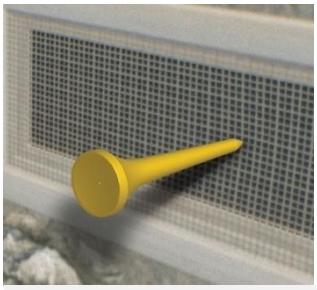
☐ Install ember-resistant vents or cover all existing vents with 1/8-inch metal wire mesh.

☐ Ensure your dryer vent has working louvers or a 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

- 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.
- 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.*

MAINTAIN DECKS & YARD (5-30 FEET)

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

On the surface of a deck, patio, or under a covered porch:

☐ **Clear all tree debris** regularly.

☐ **Remove large rugs and combustible furniture** such as wood, wicker, or plastic. Use noncombustible cast aluminum or metal furniture instead.

☐ Ensure if you have **a few small items**, they can easily be moved inside on Red Flag days and keep them out of the 5-foot buffer.

- You may have up to 10 small, noncombustible terra cotta or ceramic planters with small flowers or plants; avoid woody vegetation or trees in the pots.
- You may have a few cushions and a small door mat.

☐ **Remove combustible structures such as a pergola or gazebo from wood or composite decks.** You may replace it with a noncombustible material such as metal.

☐ **Retrofit vinyl/wood pergolas within 30 feet with all the following:**

- **Place pergola on a noncombustible surface** and include the surrounding 5-foot noncombustible buffer.
- **Remove 50% of the slats or cover the roof with a Class A material** such as metal or asphalt shingles.
- **Install 6 inches of noncombustible siding materia**l to the bottom of the posts where they meet the ground. Materials can include metal flashing, concrete block, fiber cement siding, or stone/brick veneer.

☐ **Remove all accessories from the structures** such as hanging plants, vines, and any curtains/drapes/ screens.

***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*

☐ **Remove hot tubs** from underneath a covered porch and from combustible (wood or composite) decks. **Place hot tubs to at least 10 feet away** from the home if located on a noncombustible patio material such as stones, pavers, or concrete. Ensure it includes the surrounding 5-foot noncombustible buffer and 6 vertical inches of noncombustible material such as flashing.

Note: Detached decks, covered porches, and pergolas within 30 feet of the home must meet the same requirements as attached decks.

Underneath the walking surface of a deck:

☐ **Remove anything stored** under the deck or stairs.

☐ **Remove all vegetation**—including grass or weeds—from under the deck and stairs.

☐ **Install 6 inches of noncombustible siding material to the bottom of the posts** where they meet the ground.

☐ **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:

- 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.

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

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 limbs less than 6 feet** from the ground.
- **Trim upper branches** of trees to ensure at least 10 feet of space between the canopies of neighboring trees.

☐ **Maintain shrubs**

- Choose low-growing, fire-resistant plants.
- **Relocate any shrubs located under or near trees.**
- Keep low-growing 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 privacy hedges or rows of bushes** that will create more fuel and a pathway for fire to reach your home.

Embers blown from miles away can easily start spot fires around your home. Creating and maintaining defensible space on your property will slow the spread of fire and reduce flame intensity near your home. By spacing out bushes and trees, you are removing ladder fuels that allow fire to spread and reducing the intensity of a fire near 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.

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.

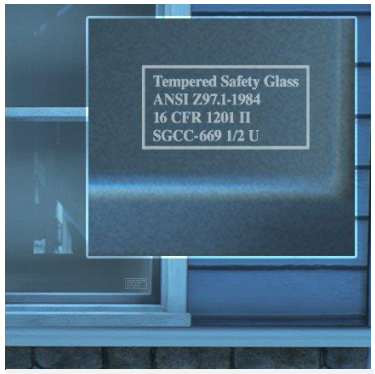
4. **Move structures 30 feet from your home *(i.e., sheds, hot tubs pergolas, and playsets)*.**
   - ☐ Move structures at least 30 feet away from your home or remove them completely.

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.

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, dual pane glass**.
   - ☐ Alternatively, install a noncombustible **storm door** to cover the existing door. These are fire-resistant.



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.

6. **Install noncombustible siding and shutters.**
   - ☐ Replace all combustible or ignition-resistant constructed **siding** (wood, engineered wood-fiber, or vinyl) with a noncombustible or ignition-resistant material such as fiber-cement board, stucco, brick, metal, or stone veneer siding.
   - ☐ Remove or replace combustible **decorative shutters**, with noncombustible shutters.

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 hardwood materials 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)

☐ **Install 6 inches of noncombustible siding material to the bottom of the posts** and stairs where they meet the ground.

☐ **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.