

How to Reduce Risk to Your Home from Fire and Ember Storms

PLANT MATERIALS NEAR HOME:

1. Plants should be carefully spaced, low-growing and free of resins, oils and waxes that burn easily;
2. Mow the lawn regularly and keep grass below 4 inches high; prune trees near house up six to ten feet from the ground;
3. Space conifer trees 30 feet between crowns. Trim back trees that overage the house;
4. Create a fire-free area within five feet of the home, using non-flammable landscaping;
5. Water plants, trees and mulch regularly;
6. Be sure the irrigation system is well maintained; and
7. Consider xeriscaping if you are affected by water-use restrictions.

REMOVING AND CARING FOR COMBUSTIBLES AROUND HOME:

1. Clear and remove combustibles from the areas around your home out to at least 20 to 30 feet from the perimeter of the house.
2. Remove dead limbs and twigs in the trees;
3. Pick up leaves, twigs, trash, dead wood on the ground, etc;
4. Remove dead vegetation and clear out any combustibles under outside decks;
5. Firewood stacks should be located at least 30 feet from home;
6. Consider fire-resistant material for patio furniture, swing sets, etc.;
7. Clear gutters, eaves and roofs regularly but no less than annually;
8. In event of wild fire, put butane tanks inside before leaving the home;
9. Use care when refueling garden equipment and maintain it regularly;
10. Store and use flammable liquids properly;
11. Dispose of smoking materials carefully;
12. Periodically inspect your property, clearing dead wood and dense vegetation.

HARDENING EXISTING HOMES:

1. Take the following steps to harden your home against embers and reduce fuel stores:
 - a. Install screens of 1/8" or less opening sizes over attic vents, soffit vents, and other openings into the home;
 - b. If you have wooden vents, spray them with fire retardant so that blowing embers cannot start them burning;
 - c. Fire caulk cracks and openings that would allow hot embers into the home, i.e. around exterior door and window frames, edges at interfacing of materials like roofing and metal valleys or chimney and roof flashing, and the siding of the home;
 - d. If you have vaulted roof tiles whose ends are open, thus allowing embers in, use fire resistant material to close the end openings of the roof tile vaults;
 - e. Enclose eaves, fascias, soffits and vents;
 - f. Plastic skylights will melt, replace with double-pane glass or tempered glass;

- g. Fences constructed of flammable materials like wood should not be attached directly to house (separate from house with masonry or metal barrier);
 - h. Spray, roll-on or brush-on fire retardant coatings on wooden fences, decks and elevated porches;
2. List of the products/materials:
- a. Fire caulk: Rutland, clear, 500 degree RTV High Heat Silicone Sealant (Home Depot); there is also 3M 4-hr., 3-hr. & 1-hr. retardant Fire Sealants, but are bright colors;
 - b. Fire Retardant for exterior wood decks, wood vents, wood fencing, wood siding, etc.: FX Lumber Guard XT by Fire Retardant Coatings of Texas (817) 710-5233,
 - a. www.fireretardantcoatingsoftexas.com;
 - c. Fire Retardant Rigid Insulation for ends of vaulted roof tiles: Elliott Co., (317) 291-1213, www.elliottfoam.com;
3. Contract Support: If you physically cannot climb ladders, trim trees, etc. or want someone else to accomplish the tasks. Below is a list of contractors who can do the work "for hire".
- a. Trimming Trees:
 - Good Morning Tree Co.
 - Attn. Sid Mourning
 - 512.420.0733
 - www.goodmorningtree.com
 - b. Handy-helper Groups:
 - Richard Boudreau
 - Walls, General Carpentry, etc.
 - email: rjb8095@yahoo.com

 - Doug LaPlante
 - Fix-it-Man
 - 512.799.5896
 - email: dalaplante1@hotmail.com

RENOVATING OR REMODELING HOME:

1. Use rated roofing material, Class A ratings, i.e. slate, composition shingle, metal, clay or cement tile;
2. Use fire-resistant building materials on exterior walls, i.e. cement, plaster, stucco, masonry (concrete, stone, brick or block);
3. Use double-paned or tempered glass;
4. Install non-flammable shutters on windows and skylights;

5. Enclose eaves, fascias, soffits and vents;
6. Protect overhangs and other attachments;
7. Make periodic inspections of your home, looking for deterioration such as breaks and spaces between roof tiles, warping wood, or cracks and crevices in the structure.

PREPARATION PLANS FOR A WILD FIRE EVENT:

General Information: The following items are to assist the Austin Fire Department to fight a fire at your home.

1. You should hook up water hoses to your outside hose bibs so that either you can douse water on and around your house or can be used by the fire department personnel in the event they need them. Have the hoses coiled at the hose bib locations;
2. You can lay out hoses with water sprinklers attached and douse your wooden decks before leaving your home;
3. In the event the fire fighters have to enter your home, the Austin Fire Department has recommended that you either leave the outside entries unlocked for entry, OR be prepared for them to break through the exterior doors for entry into your homes;
4. Be sure gates into your fenced yards are "unlocked" for quick entry by the fire department;
5. Register your cell phone with "reverse 9-1-1":
<http://wireless.capcog.org/ENS/HowItWorks.aspx>
6. Create or update an inventory of your belongings. At a minimum, make a video tour of your home, showing all rooms, walls etc. There are several applications for home inventory; here is a free one: www.whatyouown.org
7. Make sure that the Meadow Mountain Firewise Board has the updated information on residents and disabilities, pets, and contact data.

EVACUATION PLAN

General response: Wild fires can be very quick starting and coming out of a valley like our Buzzard Canyon (south of our homes). We may have as little as 5 minutes to get our children, pets and ourselves into a car and depart the neighborhood. The following are activities that you can do ahead of time so that you are ready for a quick evacuation of the neighborhood if necessary.

➤ If put on evacuation warning:

1. Pack a "ready-to-go" bag with clothing and necessities for entire family (including pets) for a 3-4 day stay. Include medications. Keep in a "known" easily accessible location.
2. Decide if there are easily-transported things you want to take – for example, a photo album, hard drive, key records, etc. Have these in an easily-accessible place.
3. Put butane tanks inside before leaving the home.
4. Have your car fueled and parked nose-out.

➤ **If asked to evacuate:**

1. Leave door unlocked, windows closed, lights on.