

August 28, 2020

RE: Protecting Your Home from Wildfires - Wildfire Home Hardening Tips

Dear Resident,

As we have all seen, the past few years have resulted in extreme wildfire devastation across California communities resulting in overwhelming impacts to families, homes, and livelihoods. We know that the City of Rancho Palos Verdes is not immune to wildfires. In fact, **RPV is the most populated city with 90% or more of residents living in a Cal Fire-designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.** Being in the highest risk zone can have financial consequences for RPV residents, including insurance companies raising rates or refusing renewals, despite no prior claims. The financial and emotional toll wildfires bring is something we hope no RPV resident has to experience; therefore, to be successful in mitigating fire risk, individual homeowners, homeowner associations and the City must work together.



The steps defined in the following pages are recommended by the Los Angeles County Fire Department and Cal Fire and include **simple, DIY, low-expense tips for hardening your home from a wildfire and creating a defensible space around your residence through vegetation management.**

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes is dedicated to the safety and well-being of its residents and community members. Your City staff is working with local utility companies to reduce the risk of utility-started fires and has taken additional steps to protect our neighborhoods from wildfires including implementing year round brush clearance by using discing, hand trimming, and goat grazing services. The City is also communicating with California's Insurance Commissioner and local insurance underwriters to understand how we can avoid premium hikes and reduced insurance availability, and supporting state bills, grants, and tax incentives for residents and neighborhoods interested in fire hardening homes.

The most successful approach for mitigating rapidly-spreading wildfire is for neighbors to join together to fire harden their residences. Fire season is now year-round and the time is now to implement these simple steps.

City staff, along with our Emergency Preparedness Committee (EPC), is available to answer questions and provide information resources. **Please subscribe to RPV Emergency Alerts by texting AlertSB to 888777 to ensure that you are informed of emergencies affecting our community.** Inquiries should be directed to Jesse Villalpando, Emergency Services Coordinator at jvillalpando@rpvca.gov or (310) 544-5209.

Please join our efforts in making RPV a wildfire safe community.

Sincerely,



John Cruikshank
Mayor

Eric Alegria
Mayor Pro Tem

David L. Bradley
Councilmember

Ken Dyda
Councilmember

Barbara Ferraro
Councilmember

8 LOW COST WAYS TO FIRE HARDEN YOUR HOME

CHIMNEY

Cover chimney with noncombustible metal mesh screen spark arrestor with 3/8-inch to 1/2-inch openings.

VENTS

Cover all vent openings with 1/16-inch to 1/8-inch metal mesh screens.

WINDOWS

When it's time to replace your windows, use multi-paned windows with at least one pane of tempered glass.

LANDSCAPING

Remove all dead or dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves, weeds, and pine needles within 30 feet of all structures.

ROOF REHAB

When it is time to replace your roof, replace it with fire-resistant Class A roof material.

SIDING

When it's time to replace your siding or deck, use noncombustible, ignition-resistant material.

GUTTERS

Install non-combustible metal gutter covers to prevent accumulation of leaves and debris.

VEGETATION

Remove vegetation or other combustible materials that are within five feet of windows and glass doors.



FOR MORE HOME FIRE SAFETY TIPS



Visit rpvca.gov



Low Cost Retrofit List

10 Low Cost Ways to Harden Your Home

1. When it is time to replace your roof, replace it with fire-resistant Class A roof material.
2. Block any spaces between your roof covering and sheathing (bird stops).
3. Install non-combustible corrosion resistant metal gutter covers on gutters to prevent the accumulation of leaves and debris in the gutter.
4. Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with noncombustible corrosion corrosion-resistant metal mesh screen ([spark arrestor](#)), with 3/8-inch to 1/2-inch openings.**
5. Cover all vent openings with 1/16-inch to 1/8-inch noncombustible corrosion resistant metal mesh screens.**
6. Caulk and plug gaps greater than 1/16-inch around exposed rafters and blocking to prevent ember intrusion.
7. Inspect exterior siding for dry rot, gaps, cracks and warping. Caulk or plug gaps greater than 1/16-inch in siding and replace any damaged boards, including those with dry rot.
8. Install weather stripping to gaps greater than 1/16-inch in garage doors to prevent ember intrusion. The stripping must be compliant with UL Standard 10C.
9. When it's time to replace your windows, replace them with multi-paned windows with at least one pane of tempered glass.
10. When it's time to replace your siding or deck, use compliant noncombustible, ignition-resistant, or other [materials approved by the Office of the State Fire Marshal \(OSFM\)](#).

5 No Cost Ways to Create Defensible Space and Enhance the Effects of a Hardened Home

1. Regularly clean your roof, gutters, decks, and the base of walls regularly to avoid the accumulation of fallen leaves, needles and other flammable materials (see [Defensible Space](#) for more details).
2. Ensure all combustible materials are removed from underneath, on top of, or within five feet of a deck.
3. Remove vegetation or other combustible materials that are within five feet of windows and glass doors.
4. Replace wood mulch products within five feet of all structures with noncombustible products such as dirt, stone, or gravel.
5. Remove all dead or dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves, weeds, and pine needles within 30 feet of all structures or to the property line.

*This list was developed as a best practices guide and to assist homeowners to ensure their home is more ignition-resistant from wildfires. Low cost can be subjective. Some of these items are based on upgrading to more stringent materials when that feature is up for replacement due to normal maintenance or lifespan, i.e. roofs.

** Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh as they can melt or burn.

Updated 1/31/2020

BRUSH CLEARANCE GUIDANCE/REQUIREMENTS

The following guidance for brush clearance is applicable for all homeowners and is based on requirements established by the Los Angeles County Fire Department for property adjacent to brush covered areas:

1. Remove all flammable vegetation or combustible growth, or mow to stubble height of 3 inches, for 30 feet around any structure or 50 feet in high hazard areas. Flammable vegetation include Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Eucalyptus, Juniper, Pine and Pampas Grass. Exception: Trees that are individually planted and spaced/maintained in a manner that they do not form a means of transmitting fire to the structure.
2. Create a firebreak for 100 feet around any structure (or up to property line if less than 100 feet) by clearing, cutting back, thinning out, and removing flammable and dead vegetation. For high hazard areas, this distance is 200 feet.
3. All trees and shrubs shall be maintained free of deadwood and litter. Shrubs shall be trimmed up from the ground 1/3 of their height. Trees shall be trimmed up to a minimum of 6 feet or 1/3 their height up to 40 feet.
4. Remove that portion of any tree that extends within 10 feet of the outlet of a chimney.
5. Provide a minimum of 3 feet clearance around all fire hydrants.

Please note, all plants will burn under extreme fire weather conditions. Fire-resistant plants burn at a relatively low intensity when maintained. To best protect your home from fire, it is recommended that fire-resistant plants are used when landscaping. For additional information, review the County of Los Angeles Fire Department's Ready! Set! Go! Program by visiting www.fire.lacounty.gov/rsg/

REMEMBER: VERY HIGH AND HIGH FIRE HAZARD AREAS REQUIRE 200 FEET OF CLEARANCE

