

REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK

North Berkeley Hills Firewise Community







2025 - 2027

Dear Neighbor: We are now an official, newly expanded Firewise Community, recognized by the City of Berkeley Fire Department (BFD), the State of California (CalFIRE), the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), and by insurance companies that offer fire insurance to Californians. As part of this recognition, we are committed to voluntarily mitigating the risk of wildfire that could destroy our homes.

Flying embers are our biggest threat. When faced with an overwhelming storm of flying and swirling embers, the fire department will triage and focus its limited resources on saving the properties that are most prepared and most likely to survive. Home hardening and defensible space actions have been proven to be the best way to reduce the risk of ember-ignited fires in our neighborhood. We can individually, and as a neighborhood and community mitigate the risks of wildfire, especially fires ignited by flying embers, with sensible home hardening and defensible space measures that will preserve our homes and the beloved trees, bushes and plantings that surround them.

You have probably already had a fire department inspection. This list elaborates on its recommendations and our approved 2025 Firewise Action Plan, starting with inexpensive easy-to-do things to help protect your home from flying embers and wildfire.

For more info, see <https://BerkeleyFirewise.org> or <https://www.berkeleyfiresafe.org/>

Home Hardening - Easiest and Most Important	
	Vents: Inspect foundation and eave vents to ensure they are a maximum 1/8-inch metal mesh with no holes. Repair, replace or add new 1/16-inch stainless steel mesh to the existing vents. The BFD offers mesh for free, although you have to install it yourself. See BFD website for a list of contractors.
	Gutters: Install metal mesh leaf guards on gutters to prevent debris from collecting in them. Verify that gutters and downspouts are metal and not plastic. Look for guards with 1/16 inch mesh and a metal support frame to keep the mesh from sagging, and secured with screws - not wedged into place.
	Garage Door Weatherstrip: Install weatherstripping around the perimeter of garage doors to keep flying embers out. Don't forget the door bottom where embers can blow in. Truitt and White offer products made by Pemko for different door types.
	Roof: Inspect roof ideally every year. Replace or repair loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent embers from lodging in gaps. Close off the ends of barrel-shape tiles. Sweep off leaves that often collect at valleys and at roof-to-wall transitions.
	Under Wood Decks: Remove all combustible materials from under wood decks, porches, and stairs. Items include plantings, ground cover, wood, garden supplies, etc. Alternatively, install 1/16-inch metal mesh screen around entire perimeter of the space below decks to stop flying embers.
	Flammable Sources: Keep propane and charcoal grilles away from buildings and combustible materials. Store gas tanks away from house and other structures.

Defensible Space - Reduce/Eliminate Yard Fuels 0 - 5 feet from Home and Structures



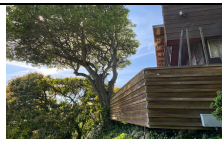
The Critical Space Zone: Create a five-foot wide ember-resistant area next to your house and other structures using non-combustible materials, such as soil, gravel, stones, brick, or concrete. Flying embers will hit the side of your house and fall to the ground where they can start another fire.



Eliminate Fuel for Embers: Clear debris and leaf litter on or near wood decking, wood stairs, fencing, roofing and gutters, and other structures, and from beneath plants, bushes and trees next to your house, especially during Red Flag Warnings. Also remove flammable grasses and wood compost.



Avoid Combustible Plants: Remove combustible landscaping such as bamboo, juniper, eucalyptus, rosemary and other plants high in flammable resins, oils, and waxes. Succulents may be OK if leaf litter is removed because they are high in water content. Expect flames to rise to 3 times above the height of a burning plant.



Tree Limbs (Over the Roof and Ladder Fuels): Remove tree limbs a minimum of five feet vertically above rooflines, ten feet away from chimneys and stovepipes, and six feet from the ground or from understory vegetation to provide a firebreak. Trees are fine as long as their branches and leaves don't provide a pathway for a fire to spread.



During Red Flag Warnings, move combustible materials, such as yard furniture and plastic garbage and recycling containers, away from the house and other structures.

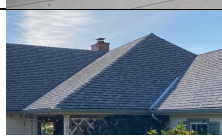
Home Hardening - Home Improvements and Renovations



Wood Fencing: Expect wood fences and gates to burn. Replace wood fencing, gates, arbors, and trellises that are less than 5 feet away from structures with a non-combustible material. During a Red Flag Warning, a wooden gate next to your house can be propped open to provide a critical firebreak.



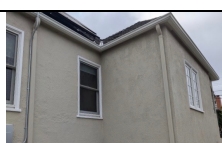
Wood Decks: Replace missing deck boards and reduce deck-board gap to less than 1/4 inch to keep embers out of the area under decks. Add a 6 x 6-inch wide strip of sheet metal at the joint where the deck meets the wall to provide a firebreak. Alternatively, replace wooden decks with a non-combustible deck material.



Fire Rated Roofs: Replace a Class B fire-rated roof (fire-retardant treated wood shingles or shakes), with a Class A fire-rated roofing product. While still allowed by the California Building Code, wood shingles and shakes are considered a very high fire hazard by the BFD.



Eaves: Box in eaves, while maintaining sufficient ventilation to prevent condensation and mildew. If re-roofing or renovating, consider cutting off eaves at the building wall to leave a clean transition with no overhang that will trap heat or flames.



Siding: Use a fire-resistant siding material such as stucco, plaster, brick, fiber-cement board, or stone veneer. Avoid flammable siding materials made of wood or plastic.



Windows: Replace single-pane window glass with dual-pane low-E tempered glass. For homes with steel frame windows, options are to replace glass with dual pane tempered glass or replace entire window with metal-clad wood windows that have dual-pane low-E tempered glass.