



# SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

If you have an emergency, dial 911  
 Public Education Office: (909) 386-8472  
 Website: [www.sbctfire.org](http://www.sbctfire.org)

## Ready, Set, Go!

### Residential Safety Checklist

Keys to Improving the Odds of House and Personal Survival During Wildfire

<b>Built Zone</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Does the house have a metal, composition, tile or other non-combustible roof with capped ends and covered fascia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are the rain gutters and roof free of leaves, needles and branches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are all vent openings screened with 1/8" (or smaller) mesh metal screen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are approved spark arrestors on chimneys?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Does the house have non-combustible siding material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are the eaves "boxed in" and the decks enclosed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are the windows made of at least double-glazed or tempered glass?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are the decks, porches and other similar areas made of non-combustible material and free of easily combustible material (e.g. plastic furniture)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Is all firewood at least 30' from the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Defensible Space Zone</b>		
1. Is dead vegetation cleared within the recommend defensible space area? (Consider adding distance due to slope of property.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is there separation between shrubs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are ladder fuels removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is there a lean, clean, and green area extending at least 30' from the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is there a non-combustible area within 3' of the house? (recommended, not required)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is there separation between trees and crowns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Access Zone</b>		
1. Is the home address visible from the street?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is the home address made of fire-resistant material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are street signs present at every intersection leading to the house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are street signs made of fire-resistant materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is flammable vegetation within 10' of the driveway cleared and are overhanging obstructions removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. If a long driveway is present, does it have a suitable turnaround area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## CHECKLIST EXPLANATIONS

**Built Zone** (deals with how the house is constructed and maintained)

1. **Flying embers landing on combustible roof materials is a major reason homes are destroyed by wildfire.** Replace wood shake or shingle roofs with fire-resistant types such as metal, composition and tile roof with capped ends or non-combustible material.
2. **Routinely remove pine needles, leaves and litter from roofs and gutters** to minimize ignition sites for airborne firebrands.
3. **All vents opening should be covered with 1/8” or smaller non-corrosive, non-combustible wire mesh.** Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh because they can melt or burn. These screens will prevent flying embers from entering crawl spaces, attics, dryer vents, etc. and igniting the structure.
4. **A spark-arresting screen with no greater than 1/2” mesh is recommend on all chimneys.** This helps prevent sparks, embers, or flames from a chimney fire from spreading to the wildland.
5. **Wood siding materials are combustible and are not good choices for fire-prone areas.** Stucco, brick and cement boards are better choices.
6. **Because decks and eaves can trap heat, flames and embers,** the underside should be enclosed with fire-resistant or non-combustible material. By covering the underside of the eaves with a soffit, or “boxing in” the eaves, the heat is better able to escape. At the *very* least, enclose the underside of decks with 1/8” wire mesh.
7. **Single-paned and large windows are vulnerable to breaking when exposed to heat.** This allows burning embers and heat to enter the house, which may lead to internal ignition. In fire hazard areas, install double-glazed or tempered glass; metal frames and sashes are preferred.
8. **Houses are often destroyed by flames that ignite combustible materials under or adjacent to decks, stairways and overhangs.** To avoid this threat, do not store combustibles materials under or on decks and stairs. Keep areas under and adjacent to these structures free of pine needles, leaves or other debris, and install a thin layer of gravel, rock aggregate or other type of hard surface.
9. **Firewood, lumber, or other large woody material should not be stacked within 30’** of any structure on the property. This material can act like a fuel source to spread fire to the structure.

**Defensible Space Zone** (includes the management of wildland and ornamental landscape vegetation surrounding the house)

1. **The State minimum-required defensible-space distance for residential structures is 100’.** That distance is effective for reducing the effects from radiant and convective heat and flame on structures if the structure is situated on flat ground. We recommend, but do not require, that protective distances be increased in proportion to the steepness of the land that the structure is situated on. (Ask your neighborhood county fire station to assist you in determining what distances are right for you.) Remove all dead and dying vegetation within the defensible space zone. Dead vegetation includes standing dead and dying trees, recently fallen trees (downed trees that are embedded into the soil can be left in place; however, their exposed branches should be removed), dead shrub, dried grass, etc.
2. If you would like to keep some flammable brush near your house, than thin it. **Thinning should occur within the recommended defensible space distance.** It is recommended that a space between shrubs be two times the height of the shrub. For example, if you have shrubs three feet high, they should be six feet apart. Root system and the duff layer should be left intact for erosion control and soil stabilization. **This does not apply to short, green, well-maintained groundcover, which do not need to be thinned.**
3. **Vegetation that can carry a fire burning in low-growing plants to taller plants is called a ladder fuel.** To prevent a ground fire from moving to the canopy, limbs should be removed from green trees to a height of at least 2’ from the ground trees 12’ or taller. **If there is vegetation growing under the trees, remove the lower branches to a height that is 3 times the height of the lower vegetation** to eliminate ladder fuels. No more than 1/3 of the live green limbs should be removed from any tree. Taking more than this amount can weaken the tree and make it susceptible to bark beetle attack. Late fall to winter is the best time to prune to prevent bark beetle attack.

## CHECKLIST EXPLANATIONS

### Defensible Space Zone (continued)

4. **This area is usually the residential landscape. Tips for this area include: Remove most or all flammable wildland plants and select less flammable plants.** (Shorter is better than taller, herbaceous is better than woody, deciduous is better than evergreen. Poor choices are manzanita, service berry, mountain whitethorn, sage, ironwood, juniper shrubs, and Spanish broom.) Emphasize the use of hard surfaces and mulches; clear flammable vegetation for **at least 10' around propane tanks**; remove tree limbs that are touching the house, near power lines, and **within 15' of the chimney**; and create a non-combustible area within 3' of the house using hard surfaces, irrigated herbaceous plants and rock mulches.
5. **Maintain the defensible space area on a regular basis throughout the year.**
6. **Dense tree stands pose a significant wildfire threat.** On flat to gently sloping terrain, thin the trees within the Defensible Space Zone to provide an average separation between canopies of at least 10'. For home on steeper slopes, the separation distance should be greater. Thinning trees can also improve forest health and make the trees more drought-resistant.

### Access Zone (refers to the area that allows firefighters to arrive at a house in a timely manner)

- 1-2. **The street address to your property should be displayed so that the numbers can be easily read from the street, both day and night.** This assists firefighters in locating your property during all types of emergencies including medical aid calls. Address numbers should be 4" tall and of highly contrasting color with the background. They should be made of fire-resistant materials as well. Houses that do not have correct addresses are in violation of San Bernardino county code 901.4.4 standards.
- 3-4. **Street signs should be at every intersection leading to the house**, have characters at least 4" tall, be made of reflective material, and be non-combustible.
5. **Driveways with large amounts of flammable materials next to them can trap residents and firefighters.** Make driveways less threatening by clearing flammable vegetation.
6. **If the driveway is long**, be sure there is enough room for firefighting equipment to turn around. Without a turnaround area, firefighters may be reluctant to place engines near the home.

### The Summary

If you answered **YES** to all the checklist items, you can feel confident that you have done a good job of building defensible space around your home and have incorporated some fire-resistive home components. While the creation of defensible space and incorporation of fire-resistive material does not guarantee protection, it can greatly increase the probability of structural survival, and personal survival, should you become trapped in your home during a wildfire.

Any **NO** answers on the checklist can serve as a guideline for defensible space structural retrofitting improvements around your home in order to increase the probability of structural and personal survival during a wildfire.

Please use this Residential Safety Checklist as a guide to help you improve the fire-resistive features of your home, maintain your defensible space and ensure our ability to access your home in an emergency. We also encourage you to phone or visit your neighborhood county fire station crew and invite them to come by to help you assess the safety of your home and possibly identify no-cost or low-cost ways to improve your family's safety during a wildfire. This is a no-cost service to our communities. For a list of county fire stations, visit us on the Web at [www.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org). A copy of our wildfire action plan, "**Ready, Set, Go!**" can also be downloaded from our web site. Printed versions are available at any county fire station.