



Wildfire Prevention Frequently Asked Questions

Fall in California typically means dry conditions that are ripe for a wildfire disaster, such as the devastating Oakland Hills Fire in 1991. The following answers to Frequently Asked Questions on wildfire prevention are provided by the Fire Prevention Bureau of the Oakland Fire Department to help prevent such a disaster from occurring again.

Q. Am I required to maintain my property year round?

A. Yes, though inspections are generally in the spring and summer, you are required to keep your property fire-safe year-round.

Q. Should ivy climbing on my house and trees be removed?

A. Yes, ivy and other vines act as a fire ladder and make your home vulnerable to fire.

Q. How can I avoid the erosion from vegetation removal?

A. Especially on slopes, don't remove all vegetation—roots, grasses, shrubs, and trees keep slopes stable.

Q. Can you recommend some fire resistant plants?

A. For a guide to Fire Wise Native Plants, go to <http://www.oaklandpw.com/creeks/living.htm> and/or check some of the web sites listed by the OFD. (Call 510.238.7388)

Q. I don't use my fireplace. Do I still need a spark arrester?

A. Yes. All working fireplaces must have a spark arrester as defined in the Uniform Fire Code.

Q. Does the required 30-foot clearance [around the house] include ornamental plants and trees and native plants?

A. No, but trees and plants must be maintained and limbed.

Q. Are there any additional tips for addressing wildfire prevention during a very wet season through plant and vegetation management?

A. A wet season usually means lots of plant growth that will ultimately die, dry, and become fire tinder for the Montclair hills and valleys. To help address this situation:

- Plant fire-resistant shrubs and trees in your safety zone and on the remainder of your property. Fire-resistant plants are less likely to catch and spread fire closer to your home. For example, hardwood trees are more fire-resistant than pine, evergreen, eucalyptus, or fir trees.
- Rake away leaves, dead limbs, and twigs. Remove leaves and rubbish from under structures and dispose of them properly. Clear all flammable vegetation. This will help reduce the fuel load.
- Have a professional tree service thin a 15-foot space between tree crowns, and remove limbs within 6 to 10 feet of the ground. This will help reduce the chance of fire spreading from tree to tree or from ground to tree.
- Remove dead branches from all trees. Dead branches are easily combustible.
- Keep all tree and shrub limbs trimmed so they don't come in contact with electrical wires. Electrical wires can be easily damaged or knocked loose by swaying branches.
- Keep trees adjacent to buildings free of dead or dying wood and moss. Taller plants are more likely to spread fire.
- Prune tree branches and shrubs within 15 feet of a stovepipe or chimney outlet.

For more on wildfire planning, prevention, and response, go to:
http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_594_,00.htm