

Ready, Set, GO!

WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

*Helping Chula Vista Residents
Prepare for Wildfire*

*With important
checklists and
information to
keep you and
your family safe!*



www.ReadySetGoCV.org

Ready, Set, GO!

WILDFIRE ACTION PLAN

Helping Chula Vista Residents Prepare for Wildfire

Dear Resident,

Chula Vista is a beautiful place to live, but it doesn't come without its risks. Fire season is now a year-round reality, requiring firefighters and residents to constantly be on heightened alert for the threat of wildfire.

Wildland fire, fueled by dry vegetation and driven by hot dry winds, are extremely dangerous and impossible to control. Many homes have been built and landscaped without a full understanding of the impact a fire could have on them. Very few people have adequately prepared their families for a quick evacuation, and many don't realize the potential consequences of choosing to ignore an evacuation order until it is too late.

It's not a question of "if" but "when" the next major wildfire will occur in San Diego County. The Chula Vista Fire Department (CVFD) takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildfire. However, in a major wildfire, there will not be enough fire engines or firefighters to defend every home in the early stages of the incident. That's why the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but you. Through advanced planning and preparation, we can all be ready for wildfire.

This guide will give you what you need to successfully plan ahead for a wildfire. To prepare your home, you'll find tips on retrofitting with fire resistant features and creating the necessary defensible space. To prepare you and your family, this guide will provide the checklists and information you need so you can evacuate before the wildfire gets too close. The CVFD always recommends that you comply with evacuation orders resulting from wildfire. When it happens, you'll be ready!

I hope you find this guide to be helpful in creating a heightened awareness and a more fire-safe environment for you and your family.



Justin Gipson
Deputy Fire Chief / Fire Marshal

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Living in the Wildland Urban Interface and the Ember Zone

If you live next to a natural area, the **Wildland Urban Interface**, you should provide firefighters with the defensible space they need to protect your home. The buffer zone you create by removing weeds, brush, and other vegetation helps keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risk from flying embers.

A home within one mile of a natural area is in the **Ember Zone**. Wind-driven embers can attack and destroy homes or neighborhoods far from the actual flame front of the wildland fire. You and your home must be prepared well before a fire occurs.



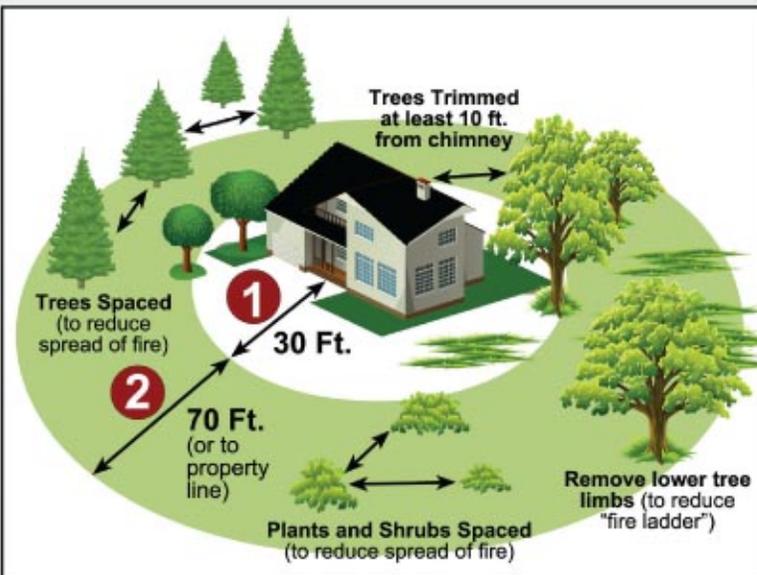
Get Ready

Create a Defensible Home

A defensible home has the greatest potential for survivability in the event of a wildfire during average wind conditions. Defensible homes are those that are in compliance with defensible space requirements or a fuel modification program and have been hardened in accordance with Chapter 7A of the California Building Code.

What is Defensible Space ?

Defensible space is the required distance between a structure and the wildland area that, under normal conditions, creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildfire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame impingement and radiant heat. Compliance is essential for structure survivability during wildfire conditions. Defensible space requirements apply to all structures regardless of the year built.



ZONE 1

Extends 30 feet out from buildings, structures, decks, etc.

- Remove all dead or dying vegetation.
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from structures and other trees.
- Remove leaf litter (dry leaves and pine needles) from yard, roof, and rain gutters.



- Relocate woodpiles or other combustible materials into Zone 2.
- Remove combustible material and vegetation from around and under decks.
- Remove or prune vegetation near windows.
- Remove "ladder fuels" (low-level vegetation that allows the fire to spread from the ground to the tree canopy). Create a separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches. This can be done by reducing the height of low-level vegetation and/or trimming low tree branches.
- Keep plants and shrubs below 18 inches high.

ZONE 2

Extends 30-100 feet out from buildings, structures, and decks.

Reduce the continuity of fuels by removing dead material and removing/thinning vegetation. Minimum spacing between vegetation is 3 times the dimension of the plant.

- Remove "ladder fuels."
- Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.

Note: If your property line is less than 100 feet from your home and you cannot maintain 100 feet of defensible space, your home may not be defensible. You are only responsible for defensible space on your own property.

What is a hardened home?

Construction materials and the quality of the defensible space surrounding a home are what give it the best chance to survive a wildfire. Embers from a wildfire will find the weak link in your home's fire protection scheme and gain the upper hand because of a small, overlooked or seemingly inconsequential factor. However, there are measures you can take to safeguard your home from wildfire. While you may not be able to accomplish all the measures listed below, each will increase your home's, and possibly your family's safety and survival during a wildfire.

ROOFS

Roofs are the most vulnerable surface where embers land because they can lodge and start a fire. Roof valleys, open ends of barrel tiles, and rain gutters are all a point of entry.

EAVES

Embers gather under open eaves and ignite exposed wood or other combustible material.

VENTS

Embers enter the attic or other concealed spaces and ignite combustible materials. Vents in eaves and cornices are particularly vulnerable, as are any unscreened vents.

WALLS

Combustible siding and other combustible or overlapping materials provide a surface and crevice for embers to nestle and ignite.

WINDOWS & DOORS

Embers can enter gaps in doors, including garage doors. Plants or combustible storage near windows can be ignited from embers and generate heat that can break windows and/or melt combustible frames.

BALCONIES & DECKS

Embers collect in or on combustible surfaces or undersides of decks and balconies, ignite the material, and enter the home through walls or windows.

To harden your home even further, consider protecting your homes with a residential fire sprinkler system. In addition to extinguishing a fire started by an ember that enters your home, it also protects you and your family 24/7, year-round, from any fire that may start in your home.



BE PREPARED. 

Tour Wildfire-Ready Homes

Address:

Make sure your address is clearly visible from the street.

Home Site and Yard:

Ensure you have at least a 100-foot radius of defensible space (cleared vegetation) around your home. Note that even more clearance may be needed for homes in severe hazard areas. This means looking past what you own to determine the impact a common slope or neighbor's yard will have on your property during a wildfire.

Cut dry weeds and grass before noon when temperatures are cooler to reduce the chance of sparking a fire.

Landscape with fire-resistant plants that have a high moisture content and are low-growing.

Keep woodpiles, propane tanks and combustible materials away from your home and other structures such as garages and sheds.

Ensure that trees are far away from power lines.

Inside:

Keep working fire extinguishers on hand.

Install smoke alarms on each level of your home and within bedrooms. Test them monthly and change the batteries twice a year.

Roof:

Your roof is the most vulnerable part of your home because it can easily catch fire from windblown embers. Homes with wood-shake or shingle roofs are at a higher risk of being destroyed during a wildfire than homes with fire-resistant roofs.

Build your roof or re-roof with fire-resistant materials that include composition, metal or tile. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent ember intrusion.

Cut any tree branches within ten feet of your roof.

Vents:

Vents on homes are particularly vulnerable to flying embers. All vent openings should be covered with 1/8-inch metal mesh. Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh because they can melt and burn.

Attic vents in eaves or cornices should be baffled or otherwise protected to prevent ember intrusion (mesh is not enough).

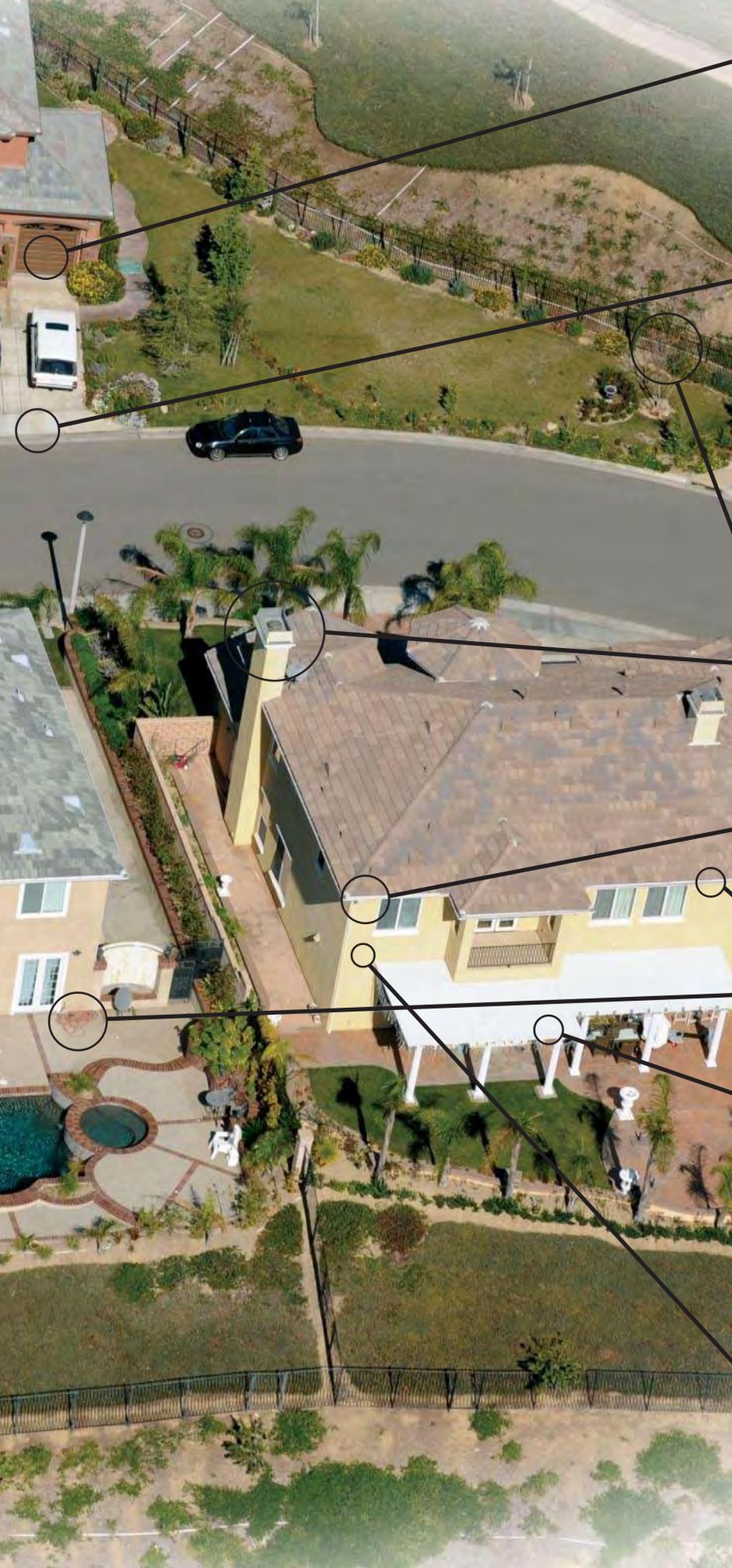
Windows:

Heat from a wildland fire can cause windows to break even before the home ignites. This allows burning embers to enter and start internal fires. Single-paned and large windows are particularly vulnerable.

Install dual-paned windows, with the exterior pane of tempered glass, to reduce the chance of breakage in a fire.

Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation.





Garage:

Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket and hoe available for fire emergencies.

Install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and the garage. Install weather stripping around and under doors to prevent ember intrusion.

Store all combustibles and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.

Driveways and Access Roads:

Driveways should be designed to allow fire and emergency vehicles and equipment to reach your house.

Access roads should have a minimum 10-foot clearance on either side of the traveled section of the roadway and should allow for two-way traffic.

Ensure that all gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment.

Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road to a minimum of 13 1/2 feet to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

Non-Combustible Fencing:

Make sure to use non-combustible fencing to protect your home during a wildland fire.

Chimney:

Cover your chimney outlet with a non-flammable screen of 1/4-inch wire mesh or smaller to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

Make sure that your chimney is at least 10 feet away from any tree branches.

Non-Combustible Boxed In Eaves:

Box in eaves with non-combustible materials to prevent accumulation of embers.

Rain Gutters:

Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris. If not screened, keep gutters clear of debris.

Water Supply:

Have multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and other structures on your property.

Deck/Patio Cover:

Use heavy timber or non-flammable construction material for decks and patio covers.

Enclose the underside of balconies and decks with fire-resistant materials to prevent embers from blowing underneath, lodging and starting a fire.

Keep your deck clear of combustible items, such as baskets, dried flower arrangements and other debris.

The decking surface must be ignition resistant if it's within 10 feet of the home.

Walls:

Wood products, such as boards, panels or shingles, are common siding materials. However, they are combustible and not safe choices for fire-prone areas.

Build or remodel with fire-resistant building materials, such as brick, cement, masonry or stucco.

Be sure to extend materials from foundation to roof.

Get Set

Prepare Your Family: Create your own Action Plan

Now that you've done everything you can to protect your house, it's time to prepare your family. Use these checklists to prepare your Wildfire Action Plan. Each family's plan will be different, depending on the situation. Once you finish your plan, rehearse it regularly with your family and keep it in a

safe and accessible place for quick implementation.

For more information on property and home preparedness before a fire threat, review the preparedness checklist on the Firewise Communities website at www.firewise.org.

Get Set: Checklists

Before the Fire Starts

- Create a Personal Wildfire Evacuation Plan that includes meeting locations and communication plans and rehearse it regularly. Include the evacuation of large animals such as horses if applicable. (See page 10 for worksheet.)
- Have fire extinguishers on hand and train your family how to use them.
- Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are and how to use them.
- Plan several different escape routes.
- Designate an emergency meeting location outside the fire hazard area.
- Appoint an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact so you can communicate with family members who have relocated.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted near your phone and in your emergency supply kit (see page 10).
- Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire.
- Register with Alert San Diego. You can include your cell phone number and/or your email address to receive Reverse 9-1-1 notifications. In an emergency, this system automatically calls and emails registered users with updates and emergency information.
Register at www.ReadySanDiego.org
- Tell your neighbors about Ready, Set, GO! and your Wildfire Action Plan.**

Create an Emergency Supply Kit

The American Red Cross recommends every family have an emergency supply kit assembled long before a wildland fire or other emergency occurs. Use the checklist below to help assemble yours. For more information on emergency supplies, visit the American Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org.

- Three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day)
- Non-perishable food for all family members and pets (three-day supply)
- First aid kit
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries
- An extra set of car keys
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Sanitation supplies
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- Important contact numbers (see page 10)
- Map marked with evacuation routes
- Extra prescriptions or special medications
- Disks or devices that contain back-up information from computers or hard drives
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.
- Keep a pair of old shoes and a flashlight handy in case of a sudden evacuation at night.*
- Keep an extra Emergency Supply Kit in your car in case you can't get to your home because of fire.*



As the Fire Approaches:

Grab your Emergency Supply Kit

(See page 8 for checklist.)

- Locate other items of value that you may want to bring (that are not in your kit, such as important documents, family photos, irreplaceable items, and easily carried valuables). Put your kit and all other items in a place where you can grab them in a hurry.
- Keep the six “Ps” ready, in case an immediate evacuation is required (those not included in your kit):
 - People and pets
 - Papers, phone numbers, and important documents
 - Prescriptions, vitamins, and eyeglasses
 - Pictures and irreplaceable memorabilia
 - Personal computers (hard drive and disks)
 - “Plastic” (credit cards, ATM cards) and cash

Alert Family and Neighbors

(See page 10 for worksheet.)

Get Prepared to Leave

- Dress in appropriate clothing (clothing made from natural fibers, such as cotton, and work boots). Have goggles and a dry bandana or particle mask handy.
- Stay tuned to your TV or local radio stations for updates, or check the City of Chula Vista’s website at www.chulavistaca.gov. In an emergency, the website will continually have updates.
- Remain close to your house, drink plenty of water and know where your family and pets are at all times.

Evacuate if asked to do so or if the threat is close to you.

- Follow your Personal Wildfire Evacuation Plan so everyone in your family knows where to go to find each other. (See page 10 for worksheet.)

OUTSIDE CHECKLIST

- Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (patio furniture, children's toys, door mats, etc.) or place them in your pool.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Connect garden hoses to outside taps.
- Don't leave sprinklers on or water running, they can waste critical water pressure.
- Leave exterior lights on.
- Back your car into the garage. Shut doors and roll up windows.
- Have a ladder available.
- Patrol your property and extinguish all small fires.
- Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.

INSIDE CHECKLIST

- Shut all windows and doors.
- Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.
- Remove lightweight curtains.
- Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.
- Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
- Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smoky conditions.
- Shut off the air conditioning.



Personal Wildfire Evacuation Plan

Write up your Personal Wildfire Evacuation Plan and post it in a location where every member of your family can see it. Rehearse it with your family.

During high fire danger days in your area, monitor your local media for information and be ready to implement your plan. Hot, dry, and windy conditions create the perfect environment for a wildfire.

Emergency Contacts:

9-1-1

EMERGENCY

619-691-5151

POLICE (NON-EMERGENCY)

619-691-5029

FIRE (NON-EMERGENCY)

619-397-6000

PUBLIC WORKS (NON-EMERGENCY)

NEAREST HOSPITAL

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

School Contacts:

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

Family Contacts:

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

Friends or Neighbors:

NAME

PHONE

NAME

PHONE

WHEN to go:

WHERE to go (meeting location for all family members):

HOW to get there:

WHAT to bring (insurance papers, important documents, photos, prescriptions, etc.):

WHO to tell (before leaving and after arrival to new location):

GO!

Leave Early

By leaving early, you give your family the best chance of surviving a wildfire. You also help firefighters by keeping roads clear of congestion, enabling them to move more freely and do their job.

WHEN TO LEAVE

Leave early enough to avoid being caught in fire, smoke or road congestion. Don't wait to be told by authorities to leave. In an intense wildfire, they may not have time to knock on every door. If you are advised to leave, don't hesitate!

WHERE TO GO

Leave to a predetermined location (it should be a low-risk area, such as a well-prepared neighbor or relative's house, a Red Cross shelter or evacuation center, motel, etc.)

HOW TO GET THERE

Have several travel routes in case one route is blocked by the fire or by emergency vehicles and equipment. Choose an escape route away from the fire.

WHAT TO TAKE

Take your Emergency Supply Kit containing your family and pet's necessary items, such as cash, water, clothing, food, first aid kits, and medications. Also, don't forget valuables such as your computer, photos and important documents.

Organize your family members and make arrangements for your pets.

If you are trapped: Survival Tips

- Shelter away from outside walls.
 - Wear long sleeves and long pants made of natural fibers such as cotton.
 - Stay hydrated.
 - Ensure you can exit the home if it catches fire (remember if it's hot inside the house, it is four to five times hotter outside).
 - After the fire has passed, check your roof and extinguish any fires, sparks or embers.
 - Check inside the attic for hidden embers.
 - Patrol your property and extinguish small fires.
- If there are fires that you cannot extinguish with a small amount of water or in a short period of time, call 9-1-1.



Residential Safety Checklist

BE PREPARED. 

Tips to Help Your Family and Property Survive During a Wildland Fire

HOME

YES NO

- Does your home have a metal, composition, or tile (or other non-combustible) roof with capped ends and covered fascia?
- Are the rain gutters and roof free of leaves, needles and branches?
- Are all vent openings screened with 1/8 inch (or smaller) mesh metal screen?
- Does the house have non-combustible siding material?

YES NO

- Are the eaves “boxed in” and the decks enclosed?
- Are the windows made of at least double-paned or tempered glass?
- Are the decks, porches and other similar areas made of non-combustible material and free of easily combustible material (e.g. plastic furniture)?
- Is all firewood at least 30 feet from the house?
- Are approved spark arrestors on chimneys?

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

YES NO

- Is dead vegetation cleared to the recommended defensible space area? (Consider adding distance due to slope of property.)
- Is there separation between shrubs?
- Are ladder fuels removed?

YES NO

- Is there a clean and green area extending at least 30 feet from the house?
- Is there a non-combustible area within five feet of the house?
- Is there separation between tree limbs and undergrowth?

EMERGENCY ACCESS

YES NO

- Is the home address visible from the street?
- Is the home address made of fire-resistant materials?
- Are street signs present at every intersection leading to the house?

YES NO

- Are street signs made of fire-resistant materials?
- Is flammable vegetation cleared within 10 feet of the driveway and are overhanging obstructions removed?
- If a long driveway is present, does it have a suitable turnaround area?



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