

The Reasons for the Rules:

(We didn't invent them, fire did)

Fire moves just like water – but in opposite directions: *The steeper the slope, the faster it moves upward.* Fire does need fuel to continue moving: remove the fuel, the fire will stop. BUT: fires can “spot” a mile or more ahead of themselves through burning embers carried on the wind. You may not be able to keep fire off your property but you can reduce its effects by reducing the amount of vegetative fuels around your home.

Flame length and height will be at least 3 times the height of whatever is burning, becoming even longer in hot weather, still longer when it's windy (tall flames will bend over in the wind, parallel to the ground), and longer yet on slopes (the steeper the slope, the longer the flame). Separate and space your plants with worst-case flame lengths in mind:

- Separate short plants from overhanging limbs by at least 3x the height of the short plant.
- On flat or gentle slopes, separate shrubs by a distance of twice their height and tree canopies by 10 feet.
 - **Double** these distances on moderate slopes; **triple** them on steep slopes.
 - To retain a continuous tree canopy (branches of one tree touching branches of another), or if there are ground covers such as bear clover beneath your trees, gradually (over several years if necessary) remove limbs up $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ the height of the trees, to a maximum of 15 feet.

Green plants will burn – Many green plants are extremely flammable. Drought-tolerant native plants usually contain large amounts of pitch, resin, and dense, dry, flammable twiggy interior material or thatch (especially evergreens such as juniper, rosemary, and lavender – keep these low, and full of fresh green growth with frequent trimming). Remove dead limbs and twigs from manzanita. Limb up pine, cedar, oak, and other trees. Thin and separate clumps of brush to reduce their flammability and slow the spread of fire.

Replace flammable plants with fire-resistive plants: Fire-resistive plants have watery sap, minimal flammable material, and open, airy growth. Plants that provide cut flowers are usually fire-resistive choices.

Overcrowded trees will never become real trees: Dozens of seedlings growing in a few square feet harm large trees, and will always remain skinny unhealthy sticks. Look at normal mature trees, and thin accordingly.

Eliminate ember-catchers: sparks, firebrands, and burning embers may blow miles from a wildfire, and rain down for hours. These will land on, under and around your house in any place that rain, snow, leaves, and pine needles fall. During fire season, frequently check and clean all nooks and crannies, especially on roofs and gutters, under decks and porches, on deck furniture, doormats, and potted plants.

Move woodpiles as far as possible from buildings, trees and power lines, at least during fire season. Surround with 10' of cleared area. Flying embers from wildfires can easily burn through plastic tarps and ignite woodpiles, creating an inferno beside your home.

Would pets survive if you weren't home? Could your home stand alone without firefighter protection?

A fast-moving fire may reach your home before firefighters arrive. Intense heat and heavy smoke from vegetation burning near doghouses, kennels, corrals and barns can kill your furred or feathered friends. Clear around these areas.

For more information on Public Resources Code (PRC) 4291 and making your home fire safe, visit these websites: www.fire.ca.gov; www.firewise.org; www.firecenter.berkeley.edu/toolkit, or contact your local CDF Fire Station or the CDF Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Fire Prevention Bureau at 209-754-3831.