

5th July 2017

A house that can survive a wildfire is one that has been prepared well before the wildfire season started.

With regards to your home, you need to consider.

- The materials from which your house is made and its design.
- What modifications you do can improve the likelihood that your house will survive.
- The number of improvements will depend on the type of house you have.
- Anywhere embers can lodge or enter your house can start a fire. Decks, windows, doors and roof areas pose the greatest risk.
- Using a consultant to advise on next practise in order to ensure your property stands the best chance of survival.

Roof

- Clear roof and gutters of leaves and organic litter.
- Good sprinkler systems that wet a roof down can help fight embers.
- **Important:** Seek professional advice for selecting and installing the appropriate sprinkler system for your building. **Note:** *(We can offer a system used in Canada and is available here in limited numbers)*
- Seal gaps to help prevent embers entering roof by using compressed mineral wool insulation. (This can be a cheaper and effective solution for existing buildings).

Windows

- Ensure no flaking paint or varnish.
- Eliminate any gaps.
- Cover all external vents with metal mesh, (not aluminium), and keep clear of debris to prevent embers from entering your home.
- Do not have large shrubs next to or under windows.
- Curtains ignite easily from radiant heat. Have a plan to take down curtains if a wildfire comes close to your home.

Decks

- Protect under floor spaces with non-combustible sheeting or metal mesh.
- Remove any combustible materials stored beneath the decking.
- Ensure any external timber cladding is regularly maintained and all gaps are sealed.
- Seal or repair any holes, cracks or damage to flooring and walls.
- Leaving gaps between decking timbers will allow most embers to fall through.
- Non-combustible decking materials are advisable in high risk areas. Use concrete stumps, metal framing and fire-retardant treated timber.

Doors

- Seal gaps around door frames to prevent embers from entering your home.
- Maintain door sills so there is no flaking paint or varnish.

Do you have structures on or near a slope?

- A fire will burn faster uphill. The increasing speed of the fire also increases the intensity and flames become even larger and hotter.
- Consider the placement of your structures. Take extra precautions to mitigate the threat if they are based near a slope. Use a combination of home improvement methods and clearing of the vegetation on the slope.

Fire Truck Access

You should never completely rely on a fire truck coming to protect your property. Remember that during a complex operation emergency responders can only respond to limited areas and homes.

Burning Embers are a primary cause of homes and structures catching fire during wildfires.

An ember can be burning twigs, leaves or pieces of debris that is carried by the wind. Embers can land on flammable surfaces, i.e. organic litter in your gutters, and then set fire to your house. With an active wildfire in your area, embers are a constant threat; before, during and after a wildfire passes.

Vegetation

All the plants, foliage and organic litter around your home are a potential fire risk. Your aim should be to manage this space increasing the defensible space around your home and structures.

- Clear fine fuels from around your home.
- Keeping grass areas well trimmed and watered.
- Rake up and reduce leaf litter.
- Remove or trim shrubs over one metre next to or below windows.
- Trim tree branches overhanging your house.
- What is growing under your trees? Consider how easily fire might be able to spread from the ground into the tree tops.

Garden Design

Choosing suitable plants with low flammability and locating them correctly will help reduce wildfire risk within a garden.

- Create defensible space.
- Remove flammable objects from around the house and other structures.
- Break up fuel continuity. (Keep plants separate).
- Carefully select, locate and maintain trees and under canopy.

Consider other property assets:

Your garage or chemical storage area location in relation to your home and other structures is an important consideration. Think carefully what you store and where it is located. Designate a safe place to store gas bottles, outside the home, where they will not be exposed to radiant heat.

The Community Safe Zone - A predetermined clear space for Community wildfire refuge.

- *This is a backup place when your home is under threat and not suitable to shelter, and you are unable to evacuate from the area.*
- *The space must be carefully considered and must be large enough for the amount of people planning on using it.*
- *The area must be checked annually before each fire season and any improvements should be made.*
- *Ask your local fire chief to assess the suitability of your chosen area.*