



**FireSafe**  
**COUNCIL**

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**

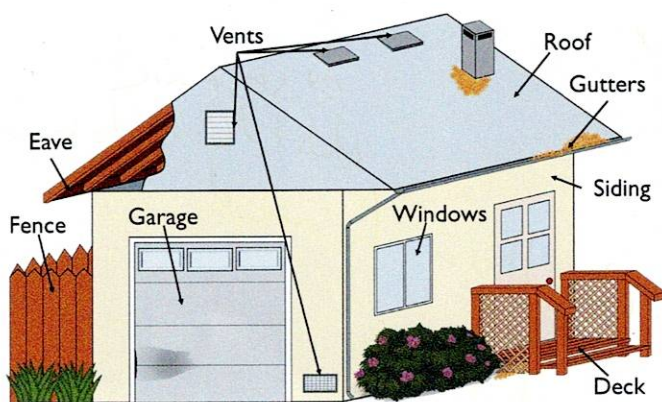
# **A GUIDE FOR HOME HARDENING**



## **WHAT IS HOME HARDENING?**

Home hardening is the process of preparing a house to withstand a wildfire by addressing its vulnerabilities. This involves using fire-resistant materials for various parts of the home, including its exterior elements and structural components. By reinforcing the structure, your home can better resist fire, especially ember storms, radiant heat, and direct flames. The goal is to make the house resistant enough to survive a wildfire with no human defense. Home hardening should be done alongside defensible space efforts as part of Zone 0.

# MAINTAINING A FIRE READY HOME



## BUILDING COMPONENTS & IGNITION VULNERABILITIES

Without the proper fire-resistant materials and proactive maintenance, the risk of structure ignition is significantly higher. Taking the time to harden your home's building components is one of the most effective ways to reduce the likelihood of fire damage and increase the chances of your home surviving a wildfire.

Fire-resistant construction materials, such as stucco, asphalt shingles, dual-pane windows with one pane of tempered glass, and enclosed eaves, are crucial for protection. Upgrading these components can be costly. If upgrades are not feasible, diligent maintenance is essential. Regularly clear flammable debris, such as leaves from roofs, gutters, and decks and move flammable items (e.g., wooden furniture, wood piles) away from the house. Additionally, seal any gaps or cracks on the exterior of the structure with caulking to prevent embers from entering the structure.

### GUTTERS

Unmaintained gutters can carry fire to your roof, eaves, siding, and attic.

#### Key Actions Include:

- Gutters should be constructed of noncombustible material such as steel or aluminum.
- Continually remove debris like leaves and twigs.

### FENCES

Combustible fences can carry flames to your eaves and siding.

#### Key Actions Include:

- Replace flammable fencing with noncombustible fencing material within the first 5 feet of the home.
- Keep the area at the base and near your fence clear of debris.

### DECKS

Decks can allow fire to spread to your home and should be regularly maintained.

#### Key Actions Include:

- Remove all combustible items from underneath, on top of, and next to all decks and porches.
- Seal any gaps or cracks in the deck with caulking.
- Replace the first 5 feet of combustible deck nearest to the home with noncombustible material.

### GARAGE

Garage doors can be a potential entry point for embers due to gaps and cracks in the door.

#### Key Actions Include:

- Inspect and replace weatherstripping around garage doors when needed.
- Seal any cracks in the garage door, garage siding, and entry doors with a sealant, such as caulking.

# MAINTAINING A FIRE READY HOME

## ROOF

Roofs can be one of the most vulnerable pieces of the home and are highly susceptible to ignition.

### Key Actions Include:

- Keep the roof clear of all flammable materials (leaves, twigs, needles, branches, etc.)
- If possible ensure you have a class A rated roof.
- Seal gaps between shingles and tiles.
- Ensure tile stops are installed if you have open ended tiles.

## SIDING

Unmaintained or combustible siding can ignite, allowing flames and embers to enter the home.

### Key Actions Include:

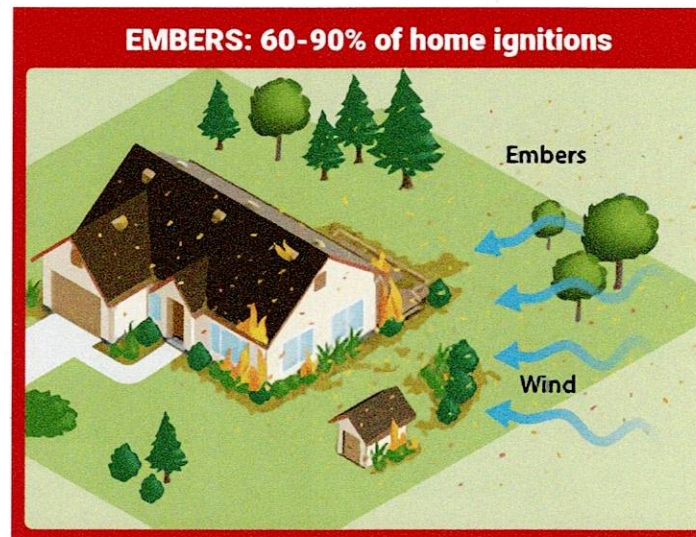
- If possible replace all combustible siding with noncombustible material.
- Add metal flashing to the bottom 6 inches of combustible siding.
- Frequently inspect siding for gaps and cracks and seal with caulking.
- Remove combustible material (wood furniture, fibrous doormats, wood piles, etc.) away from the side of the home.

## EAVES

The under-eave area is a vulnerable entry point for embers, direct flames, and radiant heat.

### Key Actions Include:

- Enclose eaves by installing noncombustible soffit panels.
- Remove debris and combustible material from under the eaves.
- Frequently inspect the eaves for gaps and cracks and seal with caulking to keep embers out.



## VENTS

Embers can easily enter your home through vents, causing ignition from within the structure.

### Key Actions Include:

- Ensure all vent coverings have 1/8 -inch (or smaller) galvanized steel mesh installed.
- Inspect your vents annually for damage and clean them to prevent the buildup of lint or leaf litter

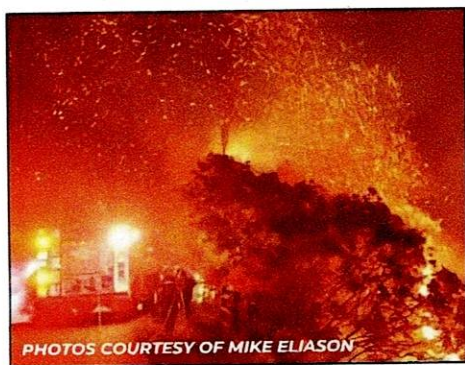
## WINDOWS

Heat from a wildfire or adjacent burning home can cause windows to crack and burst.

### Key Actions Include:

- Windows should be dual-pane with at least one pane made of tempered glass.
- Remove combustible vegetation from below the windows to reduce their exposure to heat.

# UNDERSTANDING HOW STRUCTURES IGNITE



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE ELIASON



## EMBERS

Embers are small, burning particles that can travel several miles from a wildfire and ignite spot fires when they land on flammable materials, such as leaves in your gutter or plants under your window. **Up to 60-90% of homes ignite from embers!**

## RADIANT HEAT

Radiant heat is the energy released from burning objects in the form of heat. It can ignite nearby flammable materials during a wildfire by transferring intense heat, even without direct contact with flames.

## DIRECT CONTACT

Direct flame contact occurs when flames touch a material, causing it to ignite. Fire can expand during a wildfire by directly burning nearby objects like trees, buildings, or vegetation.

## ABOUT THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL



Learn how to protect your home from wildfire with our Home Hardening Guide. Scan the QR code above for easy access to practical tips and expert advice!

The Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council (SBCFSC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to promoting wildfire safety across Santa Barbara County through education and action. Since its founding in 1997, the organization has expanded its team, secured significant grant funding, and launched a range of innovative programs aimed at reducing wildfire risks in local communities. For more information, visit [sbfiresafecouncil.org](http://sbfiresafecouncil.org).

## FUNDING NOTICE:

Funding for this project provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's (CAL FIRE) Wildfire Prevention Grants Program as part of the California Climate Investments Program. [California Climate Investments](#) is a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.





**Be prepared for evacuation and sign up for Ready SBC Alerts at [readysbc.org](http://readysbc.org)**