

ABATE AND CREATE: REMOVE FIRE FUELS, FAILURE TO COMPLY MAY RESULT IN FINES AND FEES

In northern climates, the merry month of May is described in nursery rhymes as the time "when green leaves begin to spring." But in Southern California, the merry month marks the end of the rainy season. The leaves of unirrigated grasses and weeds begin to dry out, turn brown and become a fire hazard.

For mountain property owners, this means it's time to clear their property of materials that can fuel a wildfire. Because in June, San Bernardino County Code Enforcement will be singing a different tune — that's when it begins issuing abatement notices, ordering the removal of weeds, hazardous trees and other dead vegetative matter that pose a fire hazard.

Abatement notices can also apply to live trees and vegetation — known as "green fuel" — that constitute a fire hazard due to density or by being "ladder fuels" that can cause a fire to quickly spread.

If an abatement notice is issued, the property will be inspected 30 days later, and if it has not been properly cleared, a warrant is issued. This allows a county work crew to clear the property, and the owner will be fined and required to pay a service fee.

Ultimately fire risk reduction is the responsibility of property owners. Under the law (PRC 4291), mountain property owners are required to create a defensible space around their homes and other structures. This means removing flammable vegetation and any dead or dy-

ing plants within the three fire-safety zones that extend to 100 feet around a home or structure (or to the property line):

HOME IGNITION ZONE (10 feet) — Remove all flammable material.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE ZONE (30 - 45 feet, depending on the slope) — Reduce the density of vegetation (fuel) and ladder fuels, and those fuels extending from the ground to the tree canopies, and replace hazardous vegetation with less flammable, fire-resistant, irrigated landscape vegetation.

WILDLAND FUEL REDUCTION ZONE (70 feet) — Reduce fuel by removing surface litter, logs, stumps and snags, and by trimming or thinning live vegetation.

While the emphasis of fire safety has been on removing dead trees and other vegetative materials, fire protection agencies are now urging property owners to thin live trees as well. This helps to restore the health of the forest and further reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire.

"If people do this themselves, we won't need enforcement," says Assistant Chief Peter Brierty of the San Bernardino County Fire Department.

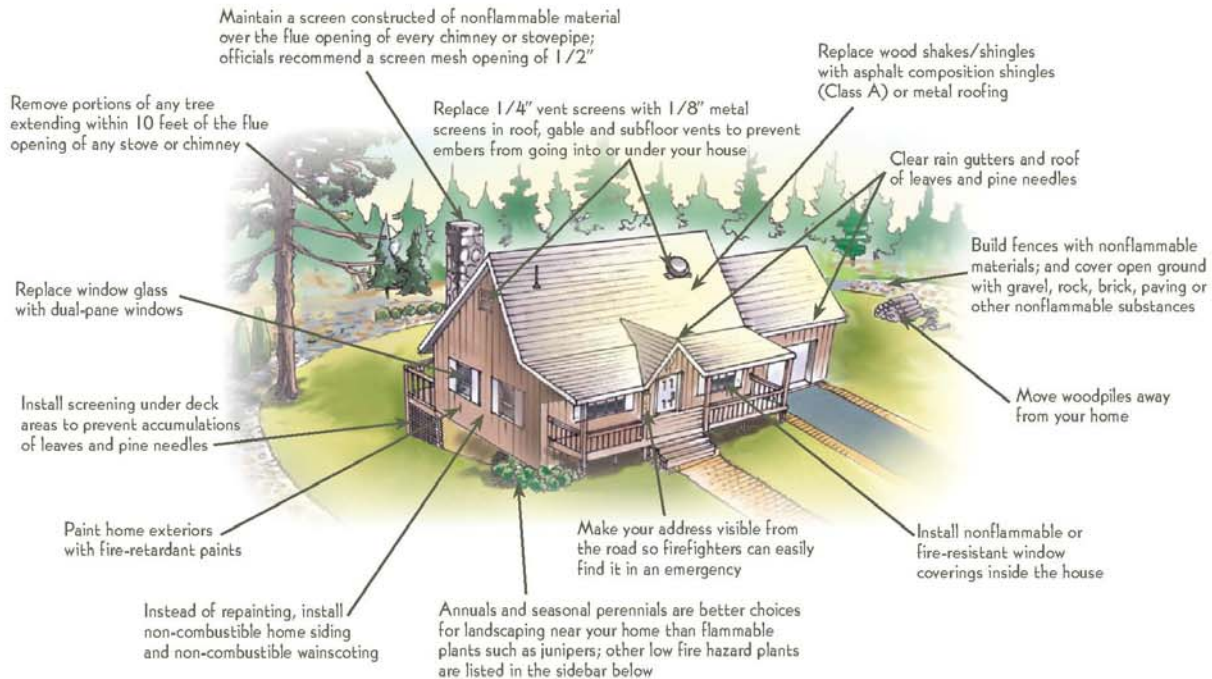
PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM FIRE

Fire safety is a critical issue, and making your home more resistant to fire gives firefighters a better chance of protecting your property in the event of a wildfire. Fortunately, there are steps that you can take, many

of them simple and inexpensive, to decrease your home's fire risk. For example, moving flammable materials away from the house and trimming nearby shrubs and trees.

On a larger scale, homeowners can also in-

stall nonflammable roofing, which would transform a home with a 19 percent fire survival rate into a home with a 70 percent survival rate. The diagram below suggests some steps that will make a big difference for the safety of your house.



PLANTS IDENTIFIED AS BEING A LOW FIRE HAZARD AND HAVING LOW MOISTURE REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE:

Common name	Scientific name
Creeping barberry	<i>Mahonia repens</i>
Creeping sage	<i>Salvia sonomensis</i>
Foothill penstemon	<i>Penstemon heterophyllus</i>
Spreading dogbane	<i>Apocynum androsaemifolium</i>
Mountain dogbane	<i>Apocynum pumilum</i>
Four-wing salibush	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>
Quail bush	<i>Atriplex lentiformis</i>
Bearberry, kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>
Brewer saltbush	<i>Atriplex lentiformis breweri</i>
Sea lavender, statice	<i>Limonium latifolium</i>
Showy penstemon	<i>Penstemon spectabilis</i>
Western raspberry	<i>Rubus leucodermis</i>

TREE REMOVAL/THINNING RESOURCES

For general tree removal advice, including information concerning regulatory requirements, financial assistance programs, and tree removal services in the San Bernardino and San Gabriel mountain areas, contact:

- San Bernardino County Hazardous Tree Abatement Program at (909) 867-1240
- CAL FIRE, Forest Care Program, (909) 881-6900
- The Forest Care partners, the National Forest Association and CAL FIRE, working under a grant from the U.S. Forest Service, will reimburse property owners up to 75 percent of the cost of implementing a qualified plan. Call (888) 883-THIN or complete the form online at: <http://www.sbnfa.com/forestcare.php>

If you have or see trees near power lines, contact your local utility:

- Southern California Edison for information pertaining to its tree removal program at (800) 640-3652 or (800) 655-4555 or online at: <http://www.sce.com/barkbeetle>