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2019





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The concentration of flammable material in the fuel break before it was cleared six years ago would burn too hot to go near and even if a firefighter could get near the blaze it wouldn't make a difference, Fire Chief Mark D'Ambrogi said.

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Owner,
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Work begins on French Meadows Forest Restoration project

BY PLACER COUNTY WATER AGENCY

In June, crews broke ground on the French Meadows Forest Restoration Project, a 28,000-acre forest health and resilience project in the headwaters of the Middle Fork American River. Like many forests in the Sierra Nevada, the area surrounding Placer County Water Agency's (PCWA) French Meadows Reservoir is at risk of uncharacteristic, high-severity wildfire. Following the King Fire in 2014, which burned over 93,000 acres and threatened one of PCWA's municipal water sources, PCWA knew it had to act to protect its customer's water supply and investments.

Starting in 2016, PCWA joined with Placer County, The Nature Conservancy, the United States Forest Service (Forest Service), and the Sierra Nevada Research Institute to begin studying the effect of forest treatments in PCWA's watershed. That effort is now one of the nation's first public-private partnerships actively managing federal forests. The adjacent land is privately owned by the American River Conservancy, which is conducting its own treatment on that land. With

limited Forest Service resources already engaged on other forest resiliency projects, the diverse group of partners rolled up their sleeves to design, manage, and fund the project in close partnership with the Forest Service. In addition to the project's unique management and diverse fundraising, it is noteworthy for its innovative implementation and research aspect.

The French Meadows Forest Restoration Project will treat over 12,000 acres with mechanical thinning, mastication, hand thinning, reforestation, and aspen and meadow restoration under a Master Stewardship Agreement between Placer County and the Tahoe National Forest. The plan for 2019 is to treat over 2,000 acres utilizing local, experienced contractors, bringing more than 3.5 million board feet to a local mill and over 10,000 tons of biomass to a local renewable energy facility; revenues from the sale of wood products and biomass will be used to partially fund the project. In addition, the project involves more than 7,000 acres of prescribed burning, to be managed by The Nature Conservancy



and the Forest Service, including 200 acres planned in 2019. Some of the forest will be left as is and used as a “control” to quantify the project’s forest health and water supply benefits.

In addition to private funding raised by the project partners, grants from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and CalFire are helping to fund the \$14 million project. Funds were also provided through California’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. In all, the project costs broke down to roughly one-third local funds, one-third state funds, and one-third federal funds.

On the project, PCWA General Manager, Einar Maisch, said, “The 2014 King Fire was a reminder of the devastating effect wildfires have on water supply and water quality. The massive erosion caused by the King Fire degraded streams and damaged water, power, and transportation infrastructure, leading to millions of dollars of on-going clean-up costs for our ratepayers and the general public. The state’s long-term water security depends on healthy forests and watersheds.”

An informational video about the project is available on PCWA’s YouTube channel: [youtube.com/user/ThePCWA](https://www.youtube.com/user/ThePCWA)



Overwatering?

Find tips on how much water
you yard really needs at
**PCWA.net and
BeWaterSmart.info**

Q & A with Einar Maisch, PCWA general manager

How are PCWA's water supplies this year?

I know it will come as no surprise to those who live locally, but 2019 was a great year for rain, snowpack, and, therefore, PCWA's water supplies. As of mid-June, precipitation in our watershed was about 113 percent of normal; more impressively, however, was this year's snowpack, which peaked at just under 350,000 acre-feet, in terms of water content. Put another way, in early May, the Middle Fork Project (MFP) watershed had just as much water content in snow as our two reservoirs hold in water, combined. Maybe it goes without saying, but we have plenty of water to meet our customers' needs and generate clean and renewable hydropower.

Speaking of hydropower, what does energy production look like this year?

To accommodate the abundance of water, in the form of snow and precipitation, we've been operating the reservoirs of the MFP at lower levels continuously since the beginning of the year; we expect high levels of hydroelectric generation to continue throughout the summer. Combined with higher than normal energy prices, early projections show strong hydro revenues this year. In addition, all of the recreational opportunities that the MFP supports, like whitewater rafting, will enjoy a long season as a result of the abundance of water. All in all, the MFP is performing very well.

What is the latest with the PG&E bankruptcy? What does it mean for PCWA's water supply?

Well, as you noted, PG&E is



currently in bankruptcy proceedings following a number of catastrophic fires over the last few years. PCWA currently has a contract with PG&E to provide around 90 percent of our water supply from PG&E's Drum Spaulding project. While we are not aware of any effort by PG&E to sell or divest itself of the Drum Spaulding project, you never know how things will play out in a bankruptcy court proceeding. Our hope is that PG&E comes out of bankruptcy stronger and better so we can continue our relationship. However, we are also preparing for the possibility that we, along with Nevada Irrigation District, may need to acquire the project if PG&E sells their system. The Drum Spaulding is one of the most complex water systems in the world, and it must remain locally-owned and locally-controlled.

With reference to fires, what kind of efforts is PCWA undertaking to protect the watershed?

We are very excited to announce that last month work began on the French Meadows Forest Restoration Project. This project is over two years in the making and is a very innovative approach to ensuring the forests around our reservoirs are fire resilient. Working with the U.S. Forest Service, the project partners were able to start forest thinning and ecological restoration on the federal lands around

French Meadows Reservoir this June. As we are all aware, our forests are dangerously overgrown and our goal is to treat and restore these lands to a more fire-resilient state.

We have been hearing a lot about a new water tax for customers. What is the latest on that proposal?

Yes, for the past couple years there has been a push from the Legislature in Sacramento to tax customers' water bills to pay for clean drinking water in other parts of the state, mainly in the San Joaquin Valley. While we support the notion of all Californians to have access to clean drinking water, a tax is not the right solution. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of PCWA and other water agencies, I am happy to report the Legislature rejected this approach and crafted a proposal to use the state's General Fund, among other sources, to fund needed projects for the next decade.

FIRE AND WATER

A supplement to Gold Country Media in partnership with Placer County Water Agency

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Q & A with Kirk Kushen, Placer Hills fire chief

What is our wildfire risk looking like for this year versus other years?

Heavy rains have resulted in a very heavy grass crop (the fine fuels have already cured and are very receptive to both ignition and to rapidly carry fire). We also have abundant new significant growth in the brush fuel modals that will continue to dry out throughout the summer and once ignited by the one hour grass fuel models, this heavy brush loading will fuel very hot fires that can rapidly spread and contribute to increased potential for the ladder fuels to ignite timber fires that can run through the canopy and become very difficult to extinguish and beyond our ability to control.

With Camp Fire fresh in our minds, is there anything the community can do to prevent a similar situation in Placer County?

We are all in this together as individual landowners, neighbors, neighborhoods, homeowners associations, Firewise communities, fire safe councils, local fire agencies, state and federal fire agencies, etc.

We must start as individual homeowners and be good stewards of our own property and create good defensible space clearances. We must harden our homes to prevent ignitions by doing everything possible to separate our homes and other improvements from the natural vegetation and any flammable ground fuels. We should all go online to www.readyforwildfire.org and download the app on our devices to learn how to be better prepared.

Placer County has an alerting system called Placer Alert. It is critically important for everyone to go online and sign up for this emergency alerting system I would suggest multiple noti-



fications via e-mail, phone, cell, etc. to ensure positive contact is available on all of your communication capabilities in an emergency citizens must

be prepared! Have a plan well in advance of the need for preparing to and actually initiate an evacuation. Know the various routes available to you and most importantly follow the notifications, warnings and directions of your fire and law enforcement personnel.

How much does a home with 100-foot defensible space help firefighters save that house?

In a rapidly growing wildland fire, there is always a time delay in mobilizing adequate resources to ensure we have engines in place for protecting every residence. Depending on fuel types, slope, weather conditions and fire behavior there are times that a fire front moves through structures with such intensity that it is not safe to have firefighting personnel in place to protect individual structures. In those circumstances, we must enter the neighborhood following the fire front and concentrate on extinguishing fires as resources enter the area. Those structures that have provided adequate defensible space, hardened their homes and provided good separation between the fuels and their structures have a much higher likelihood of surviving the flame front. When we are in areas where we can stay and defend structures, we evaluate the defensible space surrounding the structures, access and egress for our personnel and overall personnel safety and survivability. Those who have properly prepared their prop-

erty are in a position to have available resources stay to protect their residences.

How will recent hires and funds improve the effectiveness of the fire department?

We are currently in the interim budget development process and also involved in labor negotiations for a new MOU that had expired last December. Our intent is to stabilize our staffing with permanent, full-time positions and mitigate high historical attrition. Having a stable work force improves operational effectiveness and provides the ability to provide a highly trained staff with excellent local knowledge of the geographical areas served as well as the specific hazards applicable to our communities.

What advantage is a designated Firewise community?

Once communities receive their official Firewise designation, there are several insurance companies that offer discounts off of their normal rate structures. Although this is an important factor that drives motivation for pursuing this coveted designation, there are several non-monetary ancillary advantages.

Mitigating the tremendous risks present in most of our WUI communities requires a collaborative effort

As I previously mentioned, reducing the inherent hazards associated with residential development in the WUI begins with everyone working together for successful outcomes ... individual landowners, neighbors, neighborhoods, homeowners associations, Firewise communities, fire safe councils, local fire agencies, state and federal fire agencies. Firewise communities have been a building block toward accomplishing this desired end state that includes defensible space clearance, preparedness and public education.

The Water-Wise Home

Each drop of water drawn from our local lakes, rivers and streams is precious. Here are some ways to both upgrade your lifestyle with high-efficiency products and fixtures while making water efficiency a way of life.

TIPS!

- 1. Check and fix leaky toilets** Add food coloring to the tank. If the color seeps into the bowl within 15 minutes, your toilet is leaking. Flush quickly to avoid staining. Saves 30 to 50 gallons per day per toilet.
- 2. Take five-minute showers** Saves 3.5 gallons.
- 3. Turn off the faucet when brushing teeth or shaving** Saves 5 gallons per day.
- 4. Fix leaky faucets** Saves 10 to 15 gallons per day per leak.
- 5. Run the clothes washer and dishwasher only when full** Saves 2 to 4.5 gallons per load of dishes. Saves 13 to 30 gallons per load of laundry.
- 6. Look for and quickly repair leaks in your irrigation system** A leak about as small as the tip of a ballpoint pen can waste about 6,300 gallons of water per month.
- 7. Set mower blade to 3 inches** Longer grass reduces evaporation. Saves 16 to 50 gallons per day.
- 8. Water in the morning** To beat evaporation from sun and wind. Saves 50 gallons each time you water.
- 9. Check out the Smart Sprinkler Scheduler at BeWaterSmartInfo** To create a custom watering schedule based upon the weather.
- 10. Stop runoff** Water in several shorter segments, allowing water to soak in, rather than one long one. Saves 10 to 40 gallons each time you water.

Did you know...

Most household water use occurs outdoors? There are lots of ways to save, but using water efficiently in the landscape can make the biggest difference of all.

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WaterSense Showerhead
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WaterSense Faucet
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Bathroom Aerator
Saves 1.2 gallons per person/day

Mulch
Add 2-3 inches of organic mulch
Saves 30 gallons per 1,000 sq. ft. each time you water



WaterSense-labeled fixtures ensure efficiency and performance



pcwa.net



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Drip Irrigation

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Replace Grass with Low-Water Trees & Plants

Saves 90 gallons per 1,000 sq. ft. each time you water

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High-Efficiency Rotator Sprinklers

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REBATES

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Acts like a thermostat for your sprinklers
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8

Pressure Shut-Off Nozzle

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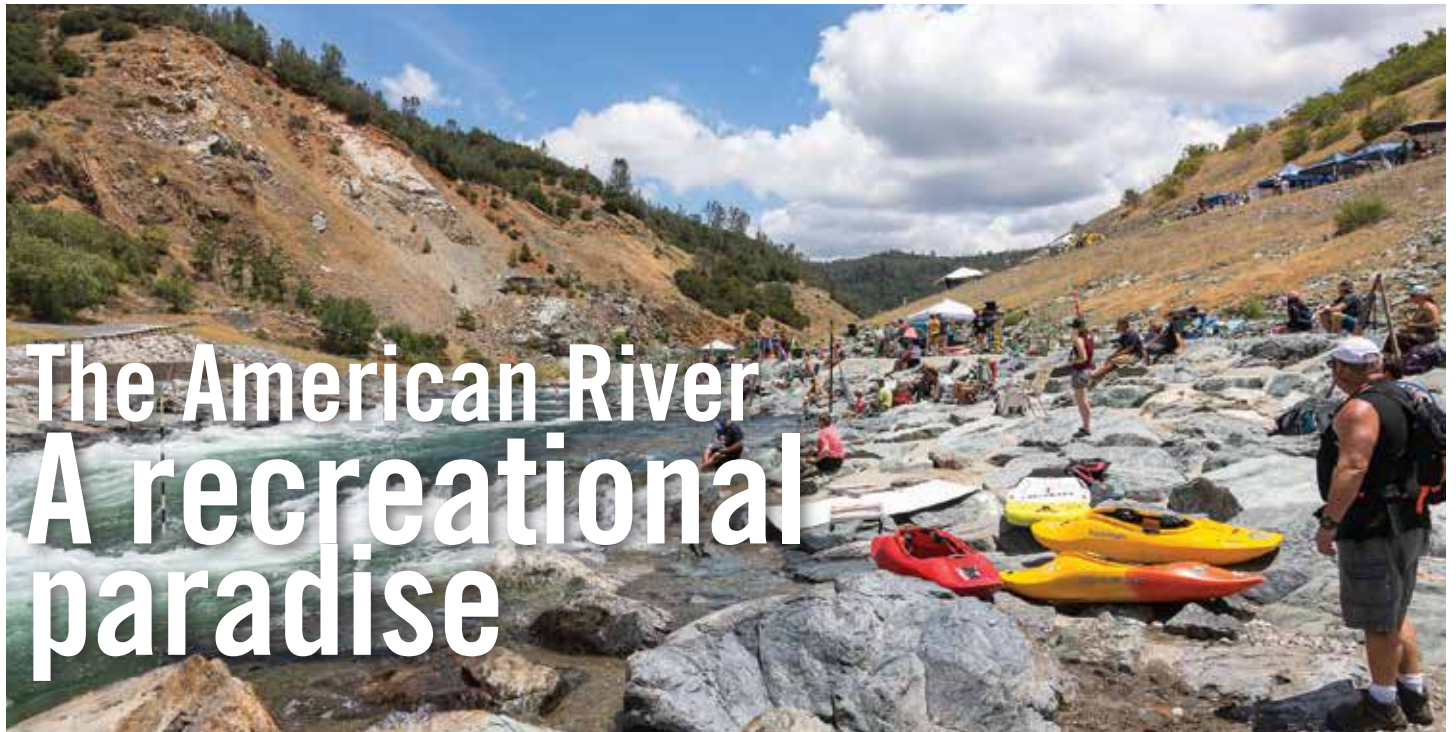
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Saves 12 gallons each time you water

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The American River A recreational paradise

BY PROTECT AMERICAN RIVER CANYON

The American River watershed provides endless opportunities for outdoor fun in a spectacular river canyon setting. From majestic headwaters above Lake Tahoe, through scenic foothill river canyons below the communities of Auburn, Colfax and Foresthill, to Folsom Lake and the lower American River, and finally to the confluence with the Sacramento River in Discovery Park, the North and Middle Forks of the American River offer some of the most beautiful and inviting recreational destinations anywhere in northern California.

Many of the most accessible places in the American River watershed are found in the Auburn State Recreation Area (“Auburn SRA”), Placer County’s extraordinary recreational and historical gem located in the heart of the Mother Lode along 48 miles of the North and Middle Forks.

Auburn SRA features countless miles of trails enjoyed year round by hikers, runners, equestrians and mountain bikers.

The legendary Western States 100 Mile Run and Tevis Cup 100 Mile Equestrian Ride draw endurance competitors from around the globe to the American River canyons, and a number of other organized runs and bike rides have become increasingly popular with local outdoor enthusiasts.

Auburn SRA is also renowned for its whitewater boating, attracting expert kayakers to the challenging rapids of the North Fork’s Chamberlain Falls and the Middle Fork’s Tunnel Chute runs. During the late spring and summer months many people also enjoy these two fabulous river stretches on rafting trips led by the region’s many commercial outfitters. Popular with private boaters are the less challenging but equally satisfying lower stretches of both rivers, as well as the Confluence to Oregon Bar run.

For many visitors to Auburn SRA, there is no greater pleasure than jumping into an American River swimming hole on a hot summer day. The river’s cool

water brings instant relief from the heat, and swimming in the crystal clear water surrounded by steep forested canyon walls tends to produce a deep sense of exhilaration. Other popular recreational activities in the park include fishing and gold panning, as well as rock climbing at the Hawver Cave-Limestone Quarry on the Middle Fork.

Detailed descriptions of Auburn SRA’s best trails and whitewater boating adventures can be found in *The American River, an Insider’s Guidebook*, and the companion *Auburn SRA Trails and River Map*, both published by Protect American River Canyons (PARC). PARC is an Auburn-based non-profit organization that for more than 40 years has worked to protect the natural and cultural resources of the American River and its canyons, as well as to enhance canyon-based recreation opportunities for the public.

More information about PARC, including how to obtain a copy of the guide book and map, can be found on the PARC website at parc-auburn.org.

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Is your property a fire danger?

BY SCOTT SERENBETZ, BUSHWACKERS, INC.

You may think the worst thing about your overgrown property is that it's simply an ugly mess. But did you know that the same conditions that make it unattractive also make it a fire hazard? All it takes is one spark to ignite a patch of brush or pile of dried leaves and the resulting damage to your land — or worse, to your home — can be devastating.

Take a look at the following list to identify if there are hazardous conditions on your property.

- **Lack of “defensible space,”** which is simply the area around your house where the plant material has been modified to reduce wildfire intensity. Contact your local fire safe council or CalFire for defensible space requirements.

- **Dead plant material** on the property including dead trees and shrubs, dead branches lying on the ground or still attached to plants, yellowed and dried grasses, leaves and brown needles.

- **Height of grasses,** shrubs and flowers exceeding 18 inches.

- **Masses of plants or brush,** referred to as a “horizontal layer” of vegetation.

- **Too many flammable shrubs,** including manzanita, bear clover/mountain misery, buck brush, Scotch/Spanish broom, juniper, blackberry and incense cedar.

- **Trees and plants at varying heights** located next to each other, referred to as “ladder fuel.” Flames will “climb” up the ladder created by the varying heights.

- **Sloped areas** on your property can have an influence on fire behavior. The steeper the slope, the faster the fire will spread. South- and southwest-facing slopes tend to have drier material. Once you've set out to tackle hazardous

vegetation, carefully evaluate the risk of doing the work yourself before you assume it's a good idea.

Do you have access to the appropriate equipment and safety gear? Will steep or rocky terrain, equipment operation or exposure to poison oak and rattlesnakes compromise your safety? Many people try to perform the work themselves to save money. In the interest of getting the job done correctly, safely and in a timely manner, don't skimp on your budget, even if it means that spending a little more to get help from a professional service company.

Finally, implement an annual maintenance routine to keep your property safe. Every year, revisit the things that make your property a fire hazard and address those that need attention. Remember, there's a bonus in making your property fire safe — it's bound to look better and be more usable, too.

For more information, contact Scott Serenbetz, president of Bushwackers, Inc.

Fire-resistant, water-wise garden makeover

BY PLACER COUNTY WATER AGENCY

When 14-year old Cody Hansen of Rocklin heard about the potential to makeover the thirsty turf at Auburn's Maidu Fire Station into a fire-resistant, water-wise landscape, he knew the task would be perfect for his Eagle Scout community service project.

"I knew this would be the one," said the ninth grader at Whitney High School. "It's the opportunity to show the community how to create a fire-wise and water-wise landscape that hopefully people can do at their own homes."

Cody and fellow Eagle Scout candidate David Hurren, an eighth grader at Spring View Middle School, are partnering with Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) and the City of Auburn Fire Department to transform the fire station's expansive swath of lawn along Auburn Folsom Road into a beautiful demonstration garden. The project is part of their application to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America.

"I'm excited to be a part this community project that will be here for years to come," said David.

When finished, the landscape will feature more than 100 beautiful flowers, plants and shrubs that are both fire-resistant and water-wise, as well as an efficient irrigation system that includes subsurface drip irrigation and a weather-based sprinkler timer. The ultimate goal is to create a long-term educational resource for the community to enjoy.

"Fire is a real danger that we are all familiar with," said Matt Young, PCWA Director of Customer Services. "The exciting aspect of this project is the community support and involvement to showcase a fire-wise landscape



while refreshing a small corner of Placer County."

The project is ambitious and will require countless hours to secure and manage donations of materials and volunteers. Several businesses have already stepped in to offer their services and products, including Yamasaki Landscaping in Auburn (landscape design plan); Mid-City Nursery and Village Nursery (plants); and Hunter Industries (irrigation system and controller).

Over the next several months, Cody and David will continue their work to secure donations of materials and volunteers. The existing lawn and plants will be removed in August and September, followed by installation of plants, the irrigation system and mulch in October. The entire project is expected to be completed by November.

The boys are looking for help install the plants. "I hope many volunteers from the community will come out to help with the garden and also learn what they can replicate at their own homes," Cody said.

For more information about the fire station landscape makeover, including the landscape plan, plant list and details about volunteering, please visit pcwa.net.

What is fire-resistant, water-wise landscaping?

A fire-resistant landscape features plants less likely to catch fire placed in ways to resist the spread of fire to a home. These plants can be damaged or even killed by fire, but their foliage and stems are less likely to significantly contribute to the fuel and fire's intensity as long as they are properly maintained, pruned and watered. Fire-resistant plants are great in California, because they are often native and/or drought tolerant, too.

These beauties are both fire- and water-wise

Some of the beautiful plants and flowers planned for the Fire Station landscape include:

Berberis Thunbergii 'Rose Glow' / Rosy Glow
 Barberry
 Buddleja Davidii 'Dwarf Plum' / Dwarf Plum
 Butterfly Bush
 Dites Vegeta / African Iris
 Salvia Greggii 'Furman's Red' / Furman's Red
 Salvia
 Cotoneaster Dammeri 'Coral Beauty' / Bearberry
 Cotoneaster
 Centranthus Ruber / Red Valerian

State-of-the-art irrigation

The garden will feature state-of-the-art drip irrigation and a WaterSense-labeled weather-based sprinkler timer. The drip irrigation, placed below the soil surface in a grid pattern, will deliver water at the root zone with zero evaporation. The sprinkler timer will use local weather conditions to deliver just the right amount of water plants need to be healthy.



How to 'harden' your home

COURTESY CALFIRE

Flying embers can destroy homes up to a mile from a wildfire. "Harden" your home now before a fire starts by using ember-resistant building materials.

Here are some things you can do to harden your home and make it more fire resistant.

Roof

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home. Homes with wood or shingle roofs are at high risk of being destroyed during a wildfire. Build your roof or re-roof with materials such as composition, metal or tile.

Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent embers from catching.



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Vents

Vents on homes create openings for flying embers. Cover all vent openings with 1/8-inch to 1/4-inch metal mesh. Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh because they can melt and burn. Protect vents in eaves or cornices with baffles to block embers (mesh is not enough).

Eaves and soffits

Eaves and soffits should be protected with ignition-resistant* or non-combustible materials.

Windows

Heat from a wildfire can cause windows to break even before the home ignites. This allows burning embers to enter and start fires inside. Single-paned and large windows are particularly vulnerable. Install dual-paned windows with one pane of tempered glass to reduce the chance of breakage in a fire.

Consider limiting the size and number of windows that face large areas of vegetation.

Walls

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

Build or remodel your walls with ignition resistant* building materials, such as stucco, fiber cement, wall siding, fire retardant, treated wood, or other approved materials. Be sure to extend materials from the foundation to the roof.

Decks

Surfaces within 10 feet of the building should be built with ignition-resistant*, non-combustible, or other approved materials. Ensure that all combustible items are removed from underneath your deck.

Rain gutters

Screen or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.

Patio cover

Use the same ignition-resistant* materials for patio coverings as a roof.

Chimney

Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with a non-combustible screen. Use metal screen material with openings no smaller than 3/8-inch and no larger than 1/2-inch to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

Garage

Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket, and hoe available for fire emergencies. Install weather stripping around and under the garage door to prevent embers from blowing in. Store all combustible and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.

Address

Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road.

*Ignition-resistant building materials are those that resist ignition or sustained burning when exposed to embers and small flames from wildfires. Examples of ignition-resistant materials include "non-combustible materials" that don't burn, exterior grade fire-retardant-treated wood lumber, fire-retardant-treated wood shakes and shingles listed by the State Fire Marshal (SFM) and any material that has been tested in accordance with SFM Standard 12-7A-5.



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