

California Fire Defence

Property Wildfire Risk Checklist



Use this checklist to prioritize the highest-impact fixes:

- Immediate Zone (0–5 ft): remove receptive fuels; keep surfaces non-combustible.
- Intermediate Zone (5–30 ft): reduce ladder fuels; create separation between plants and canopy.
- Extended Zone (30–100 ft): break up continuity; maintain access, spacing, and managed vegetation.



Zone 0-5 feet: Immediate Zone (highest impact)

Goal: lowest ignition potential right next to the structure.

- ☐ Remove leaf litter, needles, and dead vegetation against walls, steps, and decks (especially in corners).
- ☐ Replace combustible mulch within 0-5 ft with gravel, pavers, or other noncombustible ground cover where feasible.
- ☐ Keep plants off siding: maintain separation between vegetation and walls/windows; avoid dense foundation plantings.
- ☐ Prune or remove shrubs directly under windows and near vents; keep spacing and reduce volume.
- ☐ Clear under-deck areas of stored items, leaf buildup, and dry vegetation.
- ☐ Keep gutters and roof edges free of leaves/needles; clear valleys and roof-to-wall transitions.
- ☐ Keep firewood, lumber, and flammable storage at least 30 ft from structures (or in a sealed, noncombustible enclosure).

Fast red flags

- ☐ Mulch beds touching siding or deck posts.
- ☐ Leaf piles or pine needles in corners, under stairs, or against fences.
- ☐ Dense shrubs under windows or beneath low tree limbs.



Zone 5-30 feet: Intermediate Zone

Goal: break up fuels and prevent laddering into tree canopies.

- ☐ Reduce continuous ground fuels: keep grasses short; remove dead thatch and heavy leaf/needle accumulations.
- ☐ Thin and space shrubs; avoid continuous hedges or shrub lines that connect to trees or fences.
- ☐ Remove ladder fuels: prune lower branches to create vertical separation between shrubs and tree canopies.
- ☐ Maintain horizontal spacing between shrub masses and between tree crowns; avoid crown-to-crown continuity where possible.
- ☐ Remove deadwood: standing dead trees, hanging limbs, and dead branches in canopies.
- ☐ Keep access/egress clear for responders (driveway edges, turnarounds, gate areas).

Ember pathway focus

- ☐ Look for receptive fuel pockets where embers land: roof edges, gutters, mulch pockets, and shrub clusters near the house.
- ☐ Treat problem areas first, then re-check after wind events.



Zone 30-100 feet: Extended Zone

Goal: reduce fire intensity, improve access, and interrupt fuel continuity on the broader site.

- ☐ Maintain defensible breaks: reduce continuous brush patches; separate vegetation islands with paths, gravel, or low-fuel areas.
- ☐ Thin trees to reduce canopy continuity; favor uneven spacing that prevents crown-to-crown spread.
- ☐ Remove accumulations of dead woody debris and piles of cut material; chip or haul away promptly.
- ☐ Address slopes: increase spacing on steeper terrain and below structures where fire runs upslope.
- ☐ Maintain driveway/roadside clearance for apparatus access and safe evacuation routes.

Seasonal readiness (simple and repeatable)

Preparedness is a rhythm, not a one-time cleanup. Use this cadence:

Spring reset (Mar-May)	Clear winter debris, remove dead growth, prune for ladder-fuel reduction.
Peak season checks (Jun-Sep)	Weekly walkthroughs. Keep fuels trimmed and remove new debris after wind events.
Red Flag readiness (Oct-Nov)	Increase frequency. Clear receptive fuel pockets and stage hoses/ladders as appropriate.

Notes / priorities for next work plan
