

Wildfire Hardening & Defensible Space Checklist

Printable checklist • Updated: January 28, 2026

Use this first

Start at the house and work outward.

The **0–5 ft zone** is the most important for ember ignition. Keep it **noncombustible** and free of debris.

Maintain these items **seasonally** and after wind events.

Zone 0: 0–5 feet from the home (most important)

Goal: Prevent ember ignition next to the home and attached structures (including the footprint of an attached deck).

- Remove vegetation in the first 5 feet (no shrubs/grass/plants touching the home).
- Use noncombustible ground cover in Zone 0 (rock/gravel/pavers/bare soil) and keep it clear of debris.
- Remove mulch/bark/needles/leaves from against the home and from under deck edges.
- Remove combustible items from Zone 0 (doormats, brooms, boxes, patio cushions, etc.).
- Keep firewood and lumber away from the home (store well beyond Zone 0).
- Break/replace combustible fencing where it connects to the home (use noncombustible transition if feasible).
- Keep decks/porches clear of debris; do not store combustibles underneath.

Zone 1: 5–30 feet (intermediate zone)

- Remove dead vegetation (plants, branches, leaves/needles) regularly.
- Keep grasses mowed and vegetation maintained; avoid continuous fuels leading to the home.
- Prune lower tree limbs and reduce ladder fuels (keep fire from climbing into the canopy).
- Space shrubs and small trees into separated groups (avoid dense, continuous plantings).
- Ensure branches do not overhang the roof, deck, or porch.

Zone 2: 30–100 feet (extended zone)

- Thin vegetation to break up continuous fuels (create islands; reduce density).
- Remove dead/downed material and heavy ground litter (needles/leaves).
- Maintain clear access along driveway and around any outbuildings.
- If present: keep vegetation and debris clear around propane tanks and utilities.

Home hardening (ember entry + ignition points)

- Clean roof and gutters (remove leaves/needles before fire season and after wind events).
- Confirm vents are protected (fine metal mesh / ember-resistant vent design) and kept clear of debris.

- Seal/repair gaps where embers can enter (screens, soffits, eaves, broken attic vent covers).
- Keep exterior corners, ledges, and roof valleys free of debris accumulation.
- Move combustibles away from walls (outdoor furniture, storage bins) during red flag conditions.

Ready-for-inspection photo checklist (optional)

- Photo of the 0–5 ft noncombustible zone (all sides of home).
- Photo of roof + gutters (clean).
- Close-up photo of vent protection (screening / ember-resistant vent).
- Photos showing tree/shrub spacing in 5–30 ft and 30–100 ft zones.
- Photo showing no combustible storage under decks/porches.

Notes / work log
