



FIRE READY: HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME AND PROPERTY FOR WILDFIRE

Photo by Emma K. Morris

Fire preparedness and designing defensible spaces is top of mind for our community. Since 2017, 60% of the landcover in Napa County has been touched by fire. Across California, over 4.3 M acres of land burned in 2020 alone. Wildfires have become the new normal in California, so as a community we must work together to be more resilient and better prepared; creating fire ready vineyards and landscapes is essential.

CHECKLIST: PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE SEASON

- 1. Know your area.** *It is called 'situation awareness' in the fire service, but it applies to everybody.*
 - ✓ Know the risks in your immediate area, know your best escape routes and be aware of what is always happening around you.
 - ✓ Stay connected: sign up for [Nixle](#), Facebook, and other apps such as [Watch Duty](#) that will alert you to any fires in the valley. Consider investing in a HAM radio, get licensed and learn how to use it. These are a way to stay in touch when cell phone towers go down during fires.
- 2. Be ready to go in an emergency**
 - ✓ Have your car always filled with plenty of gas; have the important things ready to go
 - ✓ Know when to leave; fire travels faster than you expect, when it is already on your property, it is too late. Homes can burn in a matter of minutes.
 - ✓ Play out the evacuation route: if there is no power, do you know how to open the garage door? Your gate? Work through the details ahead of time when you are calm and have time to arrange plans.
- 3. Defensible space.** *This is so important and only works if **everyone** in your neighborhood participates.*
 - ✓ Clean up your property: remove piles of junk and debris; limb your trees and thin out the canopies (spacing between trees is also important. Most forests are too dense. Better to open things up and allow the trees to thrive)
 - ✓ If you have dense forests around your home, create a shaded fuel-break
 - ✓ Have at least 100-feet of clean and tidy area around every structure; 150-feet if you have slopes. As you move closer to the structure itself, space should be even cleaner and more open.
 - ✓ Get rid of oily, flammable plants around your garden and ensure you have a 5 to 10-foot area around any structure – it is critical.
 - For example: take away that old rosemary bush that's growing right up against your front door. Without the fuel, the fire won't find its way to your front door.
 - Another fire service term is "ladder fuels". Ladder fuels refer to brush and untrimmed trees that are low to the ground, allowing fire to work its way up, into the low-hanging branches, then up the ladder into the trees, which then spreads from tree to tree.
 - ✓ Defensible space benefits: it protects your property AND gives first responders extra time to assess and develop a plan on how they are going to defend it.

- ✓ Choose fire resistant landscaping: consider using a natural stone and gravel for landscaping. It's safe, looks more natural and doesn't require irrigation. This type of hardscape can save a property.
- ✓ *Note: wildfires do not always start from another property. Sometimes a structure fire that started in the kitchen can spread to the surrounding landscapes and take out the entire neighborhood.*

4. **Make access easy and clear onto your property.** *Remember, most emergencies happen at night and in less-than-ideal situations.*

- ✓ Make sure your address number is large and reflective
- ✓ Invite the local fire station to your property so they can get familiar with your property. Have them point out anything that is of concern to them and their safety.
- ✓ If you have a large, complex property with multiple driveways and residences, have a map with available water resources and any access roads and gates. The more information responders know about your property the better.

5. **Property signs at entrance**

- ✓ Post signage with a simple map of roads/vineyard avenues, vineyard blocks, available water storage/resources, main electrical panels, turnarounds, etc.
- ✓ Or post signage in simple list format – see the photo for reference
- ✓ Install a Knox cabinet to hold detailed mapping information as well as extra sets of keys inside



6. **Fire engine access.** *Make sure access is clear ahead of a disaster; engines need 12-14 feet to easily access and exit your property.*

- ✓ Do you have adequate vertical and horizontal clearance for engines around the main roads?
- ✓ Can an engine safely enter and exit your property?
- ✓ Can multiple engines access at the same time?
- ✓ Do engines have enough room to turn around?

7. **Water connections**

- ✓ Proper water connections are critical
 - Are they the appropriate FD hose thread (2.5" or 4.5" sizes)?
 - Are there any water draft connections at the storage tanks?
 - Are they properly marked with blue reflectors?
 - See the photo for signs and water connections as a reference



This checklist was developed in partnership with Alan Viader, NVG Wildfire Taskforce member, vineyard manager & winemaker at VIADER and volunteer at the Deer Park Fire Department, and Erick Hernandez of Napa County Fire.

To learn more about NVG's fire preparedness resources, visit our website at www.napagrowers.org/wildfires or scan the following QR code:

