



BURN SAFELY WHILE WORKING ON DEFENSIBLE SPACE

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) reminds foothill residents and property owners that wildfires occur year-round, even in the Mother Lode. Within hours after the sun comes out following a storm, the top layer of needles, leaves, or dead grass and weeds can become dry enough to burn. During the last week of January, the Tuolumne/Calaveras Unit responded to several escaped debris burns. These quickly threatened surrounding properties, and subjected the people who started the fires to fines, and the cost of damages and suppression.

It's essential that you make your property fire safe with 100 feet of defensible space around all structures. Winter and early spring is a good time to do this work, when you can dispose of the brush, limbs, and other trimmings in burn piles. But do remember these simple rules:

- Obtain any permits required. Some homeowner associations and incorporated cities require, and issue their own permits year-round. CAL FIRE burn permits will be required on May 1st, but the safety precautions outlined on the permit will help you burn safely year-round. You are responsible for your fire at all times. If the fire escapes your control, you will be responsible for the costs involved in putting it out, as well as for any damage it causes.
- Before burning each day, you **MUST** check burn day status by calling the Air Pollution Control District with jurisdiction over your area. Permissive burn days are determined on the basis of air quality, not whether it's actually safe to burn. Burn days are frequently windy days. The wind helps smoke disperse rather than stagnating over neighborhoods, but it also carries sparks or embers to nearby dead leaves, needles and grass that have dried out surprisingly fast after rain or snow. If they crunch underfoot, they will burn.
- Clear flammable material 10 feet from all burn piles, and keep a shovel, rake, and charged water hose near your burn pile. Having a cell phone handy will allow you to quickly call 911 if your fire does escape your control.

Be a good neighbor: burn safely (and legally), and make sure your defensible space is ready to face a wildfire.

For more information about defensible space requirements, as well as safe burning practices, contact your local CAL FIRE station, or visit www.fire.ca.gov.

For Burn Day Status Call: Tuolumne County: (209) 533-5598

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