



# FIRE SAFETY NEWS

You could save a life. You can make a difference.



The **2017 California wildfire season** was the most destructive wildfire season on record. A total of 9,133 fires burned 1,381,405 acres, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. This included five of the 20 most destructive wildland-urban interface fires in the state's history.

Throughout 2017, the fires destroyed or damaged more than 10,000 structures in the state, a higher tally than the *previous nine years combined*. State data showed that the large wildfires killed 43 people —41 civilians and 2 firefighters—*higher than the previous 10 years combined*.

Homes in the background that *did not sustain fire damage* became **uninhabitable** due to **lack of utilities**.

Photo from FEMA/  
Michael Mancino,  
Sylmar California  
Nov 27, 2008.

Martinez is a very real part of this picture, having been burnt by several wildfires over the past years. They may be started by accident, by nature, or arson.

## What You're Looking for: Minimum Weed Abatement Standards

### A. Parcels FIVE ACRES or LESS in size

Maintain ALL weeds at a height of no more than 3 inches. Weeds and grasses must be mowed, with material mulched and scattered or raked and bagged, and removed from the property, or disced. (See "Discing Quality" below.) All combustible rubbish or debris, including but not limited to: cardboard boxes, pallets, trash, wood rounds/chunks, rubble, etc., shall be removed from the property. Parcels may require additional abatement during the season due to the re-growth of weeds and other flammable vegetation.



This house is closely surrounded by fuel that will quickly be consumed by a nearby fire. There is no safety zone to help keep residents safe!

**“We want fire-wise communities, so if a fire starts, we can jump on it and put it out. That gives us a chance. It doesn’t mean it’s going to prevent it.”**

- TONY GOSSNER,  
SANTA ROSA FIRE CHIEF

### B. Parcels GREATER THAN FIVE ACRES in size

Shall be provided with **30-foot fuelbreaks** and **15-foot crossbreaks**. (See H & I below.) Crossbreaks should divide the parcel into approximately 5-acre sections. **Fencelines may require handmowing/weedeating to ensure completion of fuelbreak.** When terrain is too steep or rugged for a tractor, a handmowed fuelbreak may be required. All cut material should be mulched and scattered or raked, bagged and removed from parcel.

### C. Fuelbreaks along roadways

**Fuelbreaks** are required as part of the property line. Road right-of-ways shall be cleared to a minimum of **10 feet horizontally** from the edge of black top and **13'6" vertically**.

### D. Active pastureland

**Active pastureland** shall be provided with **15-foot wide fuelbreaks and crossbreaks** if a sufficient number of animals are present to steadily reduce height of grasses during the summer months to **3 inches** or less by the end of August, irrespective of parcel size. **If this requirement cannot be met, 30-foot fuelbreaks and crossbreaks shall be required.**

### E. Active cropland

**Active cropland** shall be provided with **15-foot fuelbreaks** or crossbreaks if the crop is to be harvested by mid-June. If there is to be a later harvest, **30-foot fuelbreaks shall be required.**



### F. Orchards

**Orchards** are to be maintained by complete abatement, including grasses under tree branches (see G. Tree litter). This may require pruning of lower branches to allow equipment access.

### G. Tree litter

**Tree litter** (eucalyptus leaves and bark, coniferous needles, leaves, fallen branches, etc.) shall be removed from the base of trees, tree stems, and limbs within 10 feet of the ground and maintained throughout the fire season.

### H. 30-foot fuelbreaks, where required

**30-foot fuelbreaks, where required, shall be provided** around all structures, combustible storage, trees, shrubs and brush, **along ridgelines**, fencelines, ditches, and along the sides of, but not in, creeks. Fuelbreaks and crossbreaks are a continuous strip of disced or dozed ground following as closely as possible to the property line, and **along one side of all fencelines**, ditches, and on top of all ridgelines. Remove from the property all debris, rubble, junk, piles of dirt, etc., which would obstruct or impede vehicles and/or equipment used for abatement work or fire suppression operations.

## I. Mowed fuelbreaks

**Mowed fuelbreaks** shall be 60 feet wide and **mowed crossbreaks** 30 feet wide due to ability of the remaining surface material to support a fire growth.

## DISCING QUALITY

All discing work, including fuelbreaks, shall be completed so that all weeds, grasses, crops and other vegetation or organic material, which could be expected to burn, shall be completely turned under to the point that there is not sufficient exposed fuel to maintain or allow the spread of fire.

*NOTE: Certain properties may require additional or more stringent abatement due to site-specific issues with terrain, regrowth, location, land use, or fire related history.*

## Following Up During Fire Season

CERT volunteers will periodically walk the neighborhoods that the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District has identified as being special concerns. If weed problems are observed, CCCFPD will follow up.

## Our Safety Partnership

This is a pilot project between our two agencies:



### The Martinez Area Community Emergency Response Team

**(CERT)** educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact our area and trains us in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization,

and disaster medical operations. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in preparedness projects in our community.

**The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District** exists to provide our communities with professional services dedicated to the preservation of life, property and the environment. The Fire Prevention Bureau provides the highest level of fire prevention services through comprehensive inspections and code enforcement, plan review and engineering services, public education, fire investigations, and exterior hazard control to ensure properties are properly constructed in accordance with local and state codes.

