



Understanding the Home Ignition Zone

A guide for Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) residents. If you live in the WUI, your property lies at the intersection of natural vegetation and human development, placing you at higher risk for wildfire. Understanding the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) — the area surrounding a structure, divided into three zones — can help protect your home and improve its chances of surviving wildfire.

The Three Zones

Each zone has specific recommendations to reduce fire risk. Together they diminish the path of a wildfire, slow down flames, and prevent embers from igniting materials close to the home.

Zone 1 — Immediate

0 to 5 feet from the structure

- Use noncombustible materials such as rock, gravel, or concrete for landscaping.
- Remove all organic debris — leaves and pine needles — from roofs, gutters, decks, and near the foundation.
- Replace wood-based mulch with hardscape alternatives like crushed stone.
- Avoid plants, firewood, or storage under decks or next to walls.
- Install metal screens on vents to block ember entry, mesh no larger than 1/8 inch.

Zone 2 — Intermediate

5 to 30 feet from the structure

- Keep grass mowed to a maximum height of 4 inches; maintain well-irrigated vegetation.
- Use widely spaced, fire-resistant plants and shrubs. Trim tree branches 6–10 feet above ground and remove dead branches.
- Avoid planting highly flammable trees like conifers in this zone, or isolate them with ample spacing.
- Create fuel breaks — flower beds, gravel paths, or lawns — to interrupt fire spread.

**Zone 3 —
Extended**30 to 100 feet from
the structure

- Keep the area free of heavy accumulations of dried leaves, branches, or other debris.
- Thin out trees to avoid a continuous canopy, spacing crowns to slow fire movement and deprive crown fire of fuel.
- Replace highly flammable plants with fire-resistant species suitable for your landscape.

Tips for Improving Fire Resistance

In addition to the zone-based strategies above, hardening your home increases its resilience. Consider these measures:

- Use Class A fire-rated roofing materials like asphalt shingles, metal, or tile.
- Choose ignition-resistant siding materials, such as stucco, brick, or fiber cement.
- Install tempered dual-pane windows, which resist cracking due to heat.
- Keep decks, patios, and outdoor furniture made of fire-resistant materials clear of combustible debris.

By managing the Home Ignition Zone effectively, residents in the WUI can enhance their safety and reduce the destructive impacts of wildfire. Proactive steps today can make a significant difference tomorrow.

See also: our Understanding Home Hardening guide, for a deeper look at roofing, vents, siding, decks, and garage protection.