

How-To Prepare Checklist

During large wildfire events, homes may have to withstand ember storms and wildfire conditions when firefighting resources are stretched thin or overwhelmed. Preparing the home and surrounding property ahead of time can significantly reduce the risk of ignition.

Wildfire Prepared Home focuses on the vulnerabilities that research shows most often lead to home ignition. Because wildfire exploits the weakest link, protection is most effective when defensible space, the roof, and other building features are addressed together.

Use this checklist to help reduce wildfire risk around your home and property.

Choose Your Level of Protection

☐ Base (Essential) Level

Focuses on **essential protection from wind-blown embers**, the leading cause of home ignitions. ***Best for most existing homes.***

☐ Plus (Enhanced) Level

Builds on Base (Essential) by adding **enhanced protection from flames and radiant heat**. ***Best for new construction, major exterior renovations, or higher resilience goals.***

Get Started

This Quick Start Guide will help you begin preparing your home for wildfire. Then complete the full checklist before applying for designation.

Base Level (Essential) Requirements

Focuses on essential protection against wind-blown embers, the leading cause of home ignitions.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE	❑ **0-5 FT. Noncombustible Zone:** Maintain a continuous zone free of vegetation, mulch, overhanging branches, and combustible items. Replace wood or vinyl fencing within 5 feet of the home with noncombustible fencing (e.g. metal).
	❑ **5-30 FT. Defensible Space - Vegetation:** Space trees and shrubs properly, keep grass trimmed, remove dead vegetation, and store firewood at least 30 feet from the home.
	❑ **10-30 FT. Defensible Space - Detached Structures & Other Large Items:** Ensure hot tubs, propane tanks, sheds, and outdoor kitchens are properly placed, constructed, and surrounded by noncombustibe materials. Limit to a maximum of 3 detached structures within 30 feet of the home. Maintain proper requirements and spacing from the home, decks, and other structures.
ROOF	❑ **Roof Covering:** Use a Class A fire-rated roof covering (e.g., asphalt shingles, tile, slate, or metal).
	❑ **Gutters:** Install noncombustible gutters and downspouts (e.g., metal, aluminum).
	❑ **Roof & Gutter Maintenance:** Routinely remove leaves, needles, and other vegetative debris from roof, gutters, and downspouts.
BUILDING FEATURES	❑ **6-Inch Vertical Noncombustible Siding Clearance:** Maintain 6 inches of noncombustible siding or exposed concrete foundation at the base of exterior walls and above attached decks or patios (also applies to deck post bases).
	❑ **Decks, Patios, & Overhead Structures:** Remove debris regularly, replace combustible furniture with noncombustible options, maintain the 0-5 Foot Noncombustible Zone, remove underdeck storage, enclose low-elevation decks, and retrofit pergolas as needed.
	❑ **Vents:** Install flame- and ember-resistant vents, or cover existing vents with 1/8-inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh (roof, attic, eaves, foundation). Dryer vents must have functional louver/flap and no mesh.

Completed Your Prep?

Apply at wildfireprepared.org. Learn about eligibility and the process at **wildfireprepared.org/about**

WILDFIRE PREPARED HOME

Base (Essential) Level Designation Requirements

The Base (Essential) designation focuses on protecting homes from wind-driven embers—the leading cause of home ignitions. Because wildfire exploits the weakest link, these requirements must be implemented as a complete system.

To qualify, a home must:

- Create a 0–5 Foot Noncombustible Zone
- Maintain 30 feet of defensible space (or to the property line, if closer)
- Upgrade vulnerable building features

All the following wildfire mitigation requirements must be completed to earn a Base (Essential) designation.

BASE (ESSENTIAL): DEFENSIBLE SPACE REQUIREMENTS

1. 0–5 FOOT NONCOMBUSTIBLE ZONE

This is most critical area around your home. At least, the first five feet surrounding the home and attached features (e.g., decks, patios, stairs, overhead structures) must be completely noncombustible, acting as a protective buffer to prevent embers from igniting materials next to your home.

How to Measure:

- Measure 5 feet outward from exterior walls.
- If combustible structures are present, measure from their outer edge.
- Applies in all directions around the home.
- Extends vertically—no vegetation or combustible materials are allowed within or above this area.



❑ **0-5 FT: VEGETATION**

- Remove all vegetation down to bare mineral soil, including grass, weeds, flowers, succulents, cacti, plants, shrubs, vines, and debris. *No exceptions—even if irrigated or labeled fire-resistant.*



❑ **0-5 FT: TREES**

- Remove all trees, limbs, and branches within this area, including any that overhang above it.

❑ **0-5 FT: GROUNDCOVER**

- Remove all combustible groundcover (e.g., wood or rubber mulch, pine needles, artificial turf, exposed weed cloth).
- Use only noncombustible materials such as gravel, pavers, river rock, decomposed granite (DG), steppingstones, or concrete.

❑ **0-5 FT: FENCES & RETAINING WALLS**

- Remove all combustible materials (e.g., wood, vinyl), including posts and gates within 5 feet.
- Use only noncombustible materials such as: Metal (e.g., aluminum, steel, chain link, iron) or concrete.
- *Fire-resistant materials (e.g., vinyl, composite, or fire-rated coatings) are not permitted.*

❑ **0-5 FT: VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT**

- Do not park or store vehicles or equipment within 5 feet of the home (e.g., cars, motorcycles, boats, RVs, ATVs, golf carts).

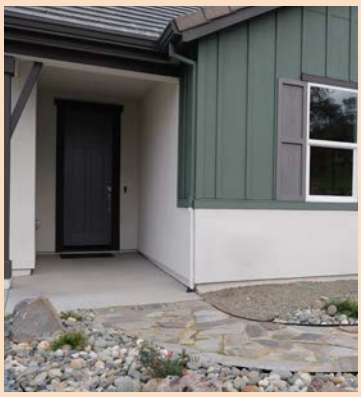
❑ **0-5 FT: COMBUSTIBLE ITEMS**

Remove all combustible items, including firewood, furniture, large rugs, combustible privacy dividers, plastic rain barrels, plastic or wood containers, shade screens, and similar items.

- **Replacement Option:**
  Replace combustible items (e.g., wood, synthetic wicker, plastic furniture) with noncombustible-framed options such as metal, aluminum, or cast iron.

If your property line is within 5 feet of the home, coordination with a neighbor or HOA may be necessary to complete the required noncombustible zone.





Exceptions:

- **Movable items** (e.g., trash bins, doormats, hoses, grills, toys) must be moved indoors or at least 30 feet away during Red Flag Warnings or extended absences.
- **Permanent items** allowed include: HVAC and pool equipment, irrigation components, TVs, speakers, pet doors, plastic downspout extensions, string lights, solar battery enclosures, and retractable shade screens with noncombustible housing.

Notes:

- For large features (e.g., hot tubs, outdoor kitchens, propane tanks), see Other Items.
- For structures (e.g., pergolas, sheds, ADUs), see Detached Structures.

2. 5–30 FOOT DEFENSIBLE SPACE

This area helps reduce fire intensity and slow fire spread before it reaches your home. Think of this as a fuel reduction zone—where vegetation and structures are maintained and spaced to limit pathways how fire can move toward the structure.

How to Measure:

- Start 5 feet from the home (or attached structures, if present)
- Extend outward to 30 feet or the property line (whichever is closer)



VEGETATION REQUIREMENTS

❑ 5-30 FT: TREE SPACING & PRUNING

- **Vertical Clearance:** Maintain at least 6 feet between the ground and the lowest branches *(or 1/3 of tree height for trees under 18 feet).*
- **Horizontal Clearance:**
  - o **Tree Rows Spacing:** Keep at least 10 feet of clearance between continuous vegetation (trees or tree/hedge combinations) and the home.
  - o **Chimney Clearance:** Keep all branches at least 10 feet away from chimneys or stovepipe outlets.

❑ 5-30 FT: YARD MAINTENANCE (Grass, Groundcover, & Dead Vegetation)

- Keep grass under 4 inches in height.
- On slopes, grass and continuous groundcover may be up to 18 inches when needed for erosion control.
- Regularly remove all dead or dying vegetation, including grass, weeds, plants, shrubs, trees, logs, stumps, branches, leaves, and pine needles.

❑ 5-30 FT: SHRUB SPACING

- **Limit Shrub Clusters (islands):** Shrubs may be grouped, but each group must not exceed 10 feet in total width (treated as an individual shrub).
- **Spacing Between Shrubs and Plants:** Space plants based on their height:
  - o Minimum spacing= 2x the height of the tallest plant
  - o Maximum required spacing = 10 feet.
  - o *Example: A 3-foot-tall shrub requires 6 feet space*
- **Hedges and Rows:** Keep continuous hedges or rows of shrubs at least 10 feet from the home.
- **Under Trees:** Remove shrubs and plants taller than 2 feet from beneath trees.

❑ 5-30 FT: FIREWOOD STORAGE

- Store firewood and wood piles at least 30 feet from the home.
- Exception: Firewood may be stored in an approved accessory structure (see Detached Structures).
- Fire-retardant tarps are not permitted.

STRUCTURES REQUIREMENTS (IF PRESENT)

Structures larger than 15 square feet within 30 feet of the home—including decks, patios, covered porches, pergolas, carports, garages, sheds, gazebos, playsets, greenhouses, and ADUs—must meet the following requirements. Unless otherwise noted, attached or detached structures are treated the same.



❑ PLACEMENT

- Locate all **detached, structures** (e.g., sheds, pergolas) **at least 10 feet from the home**, and from other structures within 30 feet.
- Limit to three detached structures.

Exception: *Attached combustible decks, attached pergolas, and fully noncombustible metal pergolas, do not require separation.*

❑ ROOF COVERING



- **Pergolas:** Reduce combustible roof slats (e.g., wood, vinyl) to no more than 15% total coverage (for 2x, boards [e.g., 2x4, 2x6 turned on the 2x side], **approximately 1-foot spacing between boards**).
- **Solid-Covered Structures (attached or detached):**
  - o Must have a Class A fire-rated roof (e.g., asphalt, tile, slate, metal).
  - o Wood roofs, plastic corrugated panels, and fabric shades are not permitted.

❑ 0–5 FT NONCOMBUSTIBLE ZONE

- Each structure must have its own 0–5 Foot Noncombustible Zone.
- If elevated (e.g., deck, stairs, shed, playset), this zone extends beneath the structure.
- Zones must not overlap with other zones from the home or other structures.

Exception: *Fully noncombustible patios (e.g., concrete, pavers) with no cover or an open structure with a noncombustible cover (e.g., metal pergola)—do not require this zone.*

❑ 6-INCH NONCOMBUSTIBLE BASE OF WALLS & POSTS:



- Provide at least 6 inches of noncombustible material (e.g., metal flashing, fiber-cement, masonry veneer, stucco) **at the base** of:
  - o Walls, posts, structural supports, and stairs
  - o At attached decks or patios: Any combustible siding (e.g., wood, vinyl) above the deck surface must also be protected with at least 6 inches of noncombustible material.

ON TOP OF DECKS & PATIO WALKING SURFACES

❑ VEGETATION & DEBRIS:

- Keep surfaces clear of leaves, pine needles, and debris.
- Do not allow planter boxes, climbing vines, or woody vegetation (e.g., trees).

Exceptions:
- *Up to 10 small noncombustible potted plants (e.g., clay, ceramic) are allowed.*
- *Must be under 36 inches (including pot) and movable indoors during Red Flag Warnings or extended absences.*

❑ OUTDOOR FURNITURE:

- Within 5 feet of the home: No combustible furniture is permitted.
- On combustible decks (e.g., wood or composite):
  - o Remove or replace all combustible furniture (e.g., wood, composite wicker, plastic)
  - o Use noncombustible-framed furniture (e.g., metal, aluminum, cast iron).

Exception: *Small movable items (e.g., cushions) are allowed but must be taken indoors during Red Flag Warnings or extended absences.*

❑ OTHER COMBUSTIBLE ITEMS:

- **Within 5 feet of the home:** No combustible items are permitted.
- **On combustible decks** (e.g., wood or composite):
  - o Remove all combustible items, including décor, and stored materials (e.g., rugs, barrels, wood planters, storage containers, shade screens, sheds (including noncombustible sheds), and saunas.
- **Open structures and overhead areas (e.g., carports & garages):**
  - o Keep free of combustible items (e.g., curtains, hanging vegetation, shade screens, stored items).
  - o If interior walls are combustible (e.g., exposed wood), the structure must be enclosed.

Exception: *Shade screens that fully retract into noncombustible housing are permitted.*

Exceptions (Applies to Furniture & Items Above): *Movable items (e.g., grills, trash bins, doormats, hoses, pet beds, toys) are allowed but must be moved indoors or at least 30 feet away during Red Flag Warnings or extended absences.*

Permanent items allowed: *HVAC units, pool equipment, solar battery enclosures, TVs, speakers, irrigation components, and retractable shade screens with noncombustible housing.*

UNDER ELEVATED DECKS & SHEDS (WITHIN 30 FEET)

❑ NO STORAGE: Remove all stored items (e.g., firewood, tools, equipment)

Exception: *An open outdoor living space is allowed if it meets On Top of Decks & Patio Walking Surfaces requirements.*



❑ POSTS, LATTICE, & ENCLOSURE:

- Provide at least **6 inches of noncombustible material** at the base of combustible posts, supporting walls, stairs.
- **For combustible lattice** (e.g., wood, vinyl): Remove the bottom 6 inches or replace with noncombustible material.
- **Decks 4 feet high or less (at any point from the walking surface to the ground):** Enclose the perimeter with 1/8-inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh, ensuring it's installed on the outside of any lattice.

OTHER ITEMS REQUIREMENTS

❑ 10-30 FT: HOT TUBS *(if present)*

- Must be at least **10 feet** from the home and other large combustible items.
- Not permitted under combustible overhead structures (e.g., pergolas, covered porches).
  - o **Installation Surface:**
    - On **combustible decks** (e.g., wood, composite): Replace decking beneath the hot tub with noncombustible material, extending at least 2 feet around it.
    - On **noncombustible surfaces** (e.g., concrete, pavers, bare soil): Maintain a 0–5 Foot Noncombustible Zone around the hot tub.

❑ 0-30 FT: OUTDOOR KITCHENS, BARS, & BUILT-INS *(if present)*

- All countertops and horizontal exterior surfaces must be noncombustible (e.g., stone, concrete, metal).
- **If cabinets or built-ins are combustible:** Install at least 6-inches of noncombustible material vertically at the base of exposed exterior surfaces.
- **If attached to the home and the exterior wall covering (siding) is combustible:** Install at least 6-inches of noncombustible material (e.g., backsplash) on the wall above any horizontal surface.

❑ 5-30 FT: COMBUSTIBLE WATER STORAGE TANKS *(if present)*

- Locate at least 5 feet from the home and other large combustible items.

Exception: *Multiple tanks may be placed within 5 feet of each other.*

- Not permitted under overhead structures (e.g., covered porch, pergola, gazebo).
- Maintain a 0–5 Foot Noncombustible Zone beneath and around the tank.

❑ 10-30 FT: LIQUID PROPANE GAS (LPG) & FUEL TANKS (if present)

Tanks must meet **one** of the following:

- **Option 1:** Locate at least **30 feet** from the home.
- **Option 2:** Locate at least **10 feet** from the home, and meet the following clearance requirements:
  - **0-10 feet around the tank (noncombustible area):**
    - Maintain 10 feet of noncombustible clearance to bare mineral soil.
    - Remove all vegetation, groundcover, and combustible materials (e.g., fences).
    - Use only noncombustible materials such as gravel, pavers, decomposed granite, or concrete.

Exception: *Healthy, mature trees are allowed if pruned at least 6 feet above the tank.*

  - **10-20 feet around the tank (reduced fuels area):**
    - Keep grass under 4 inches.
    - Remove shrubs, small trees, and dead vegetation.

Exception: *Healthy, mature trees allowed if pruned at least 6 feet above the tank.*



BASE (ESSENTIAL): BUILDING FEATURE REQUIREMENTS

3. ROOF COVER



❑ ROOF MATERIAL:

- The home must have a Class A fire-rated roof covering (e.g., asphalt shingles, concrete or clay tile, slate, or metal).
- Barrel tile and corrugated metal roofs with open gaps **must include noncombustible bird stops** at the edges to prevent ember entry and debris ignition.
- *Wood roofs and plastic corrugated panels are not permitted.*

❑ ROOF DEBRIS: Regularly keep the roof clear of all vegetative debris (e.g., leaves, pine needles).

4. GUTTERS & DOWNSPOUTS

❑ GUTTER MATERIAL *(if present)*:

- Gutters and downspouts must be made of noncombustible material (e.g., metal).
- Plastic downspout extensions are permitted for diverting water away from the foundation.

❑ GUTTER DEBRIS *(if present)*: Keep gutters and downspouts clear of all vegetative debris.

5. 6-INCH NONCOMBUSTIBLE WALL CLEARANCE AT BASE

❑ 6-INCH NONCOMBUSTIBLE SIDING:

- Exterior walls must have at least **6 inches** of noncombustible material at the base (ground level)
- Also apply at least 6 inches above any attached horizontal surface (e.g., decks, patios).

Acceptable noncombustible materials include: Exposed concrete foundation, fiber-cement siding, brick, stone, stucco, or metal flashing.

Note: *This requirement also applies to the bottom of combustible deck posts and stairs.*

6. VENTS



❑ VENT PROTECTION:

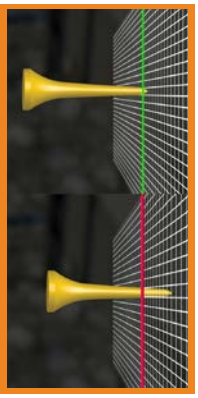
All vents must meet one of the following:

- Install flame- and ember-resistant vents installed with proper sealing around them.
- Cover existing vents with **1/8-inch (3.18 mm)** corrosion-resistant metal mesh. Mesh rolls are available at most hardware stores or online retailers.

Note: *Plumbing vents are excluded.*

How to Measure Vent Mesh:

- Measure the clear opening between the metal mesh. Openings **must be 1/8 inch (3 mm) or smaller to comply.**
- Quick Check: If a standard pencil tip or golf tee shaft easily passes through the opening, the mesh is probably too large. 1/8 inch is approximately the thickness of two stacked pennies.



Applies to the following vent types:

❑ **ROOF VENTS** (ridge, off-ridge, through-roof)

❑ **ATTIC GABLE VENTS** (on walls of home)

❑ **EAVE/SOFFIT VENTS** (under roof overhangs)

❑ **UNDER-HOME VENTS** (foundation or crawl space)

❑ DRYER & EXHAUST VENTS *(e.g., dryer, central vacuum):*

- Must have functional louvers or a flap to reduce ember entry and keep clear of lint and debris
- **Do not install metal mesh on dryer vents**—this can trap lint and create a fire hazard.

WILDFIRE PREPARED HOME

Plus (Enhanced) Level Designation Requirements

The Plus (Enhanced) designation builds on the Base (Essential) Level, adding enhanced protection from flames and radiant heat beyond ember exposure. This level is typically achieved through new construction or exterior renovations.

If you are pursuing the Base (Essential) Level only, you do not need to complete the requirements in this section.

To earn a Plus (Enhanced) designation, the home must:

- Meet **all Base (Essential) requirements**, and
- Complete **all additional Plus (Enhanced) requirements below**

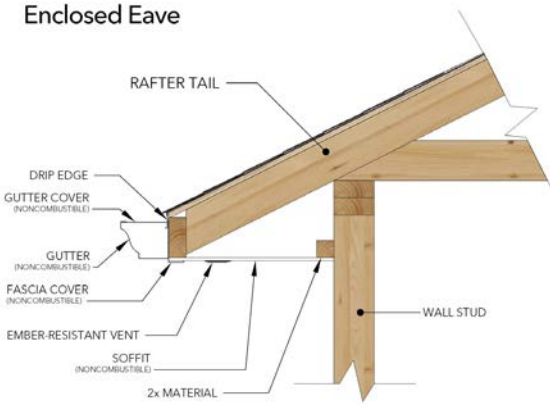
PLUS (ENHANCED): BUILDING FEATURE REQUIREMENTS

1. ROOF EAVES & SOFFITS

❑ **PLUS – ENCLOSE EAVES:**

- Enclose or protect the exposed underside of eaves using noncombustible materials (e.g., fiber-cement, stucco).
- When installing soffit vents:
  - Use flame- and ember-resistant vents, or
  - Cover vents with 1/8 inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh.





2. SKYLIGHTS *(if present)*

❑ **PLUS – SKYLIGHTS:**

- Replace plastic dome skylights with flat, multi-pane skylights featuring a tempered glass outer pane and laminated inner pane.
- If skylights are operable, protect them with 1/8-inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh.



3. GUTTERS *(if present)*

❑ **PLUS – GUTTER COVERS:**

- In addition to Base (Essential) requirements (noncombustible gutters and downspouts), install **noncombustible gutter guards** to prevent debris buildup.









4. DRYER & EXHAUST VENTS

❑ **PLUS –EXHAUST VENT MATERIAL (e.g., dryer, central vacuum):**

- In addition to Base (Essential) requirements (functional louver or flap), vents must also be made of **noncombustible material** (e.g., metal).

5. EXTERIOR WINDOWS

❑ **PLUS – WINDOWS:**

- All exterior windows must have at least **two panes of tempered glass** *(with visible corner etching on both panes)* or be constructed of glass blocks.

6. EXTERIOR DOORS

❑ **PLUS – EXTERIOR DOORS:**

- Doors must made of noncombustible material or solid-core wood at least 1¾ inches (44 mm) thick
- Must include a noncombustible threshold.
- If the door includes glass, it must have two panes of tempered glass.
- **Alternative:** Install a noncombustible storm door over the existing door.



7. EXTERIOR WALL COVERINGS & SHUTTERS

❑ **PLUS – SIDING MATERIAL:**

- **All exterior wall coverings (siding) must be made of noncombustible material** (e.g., brick, concrete, fiber-cement, masonry veneer, metal, or stucco). *This is in addition to the **Base (Essential)** requirement of 6 inches of noncombustible material at the base of walls.*

❑ **PLUS – SHUTTER MATERIAL (if present):** All shutters (decorative or operable) must be noncombustible.

Note: *Combustible and ignition-resistant siding materials are not permitted, including vinyl, wood siding (lap/shake/shingle), engineered wood, or other wood-based products (even if treated or coated or the assembly behind the material is noncombustible).*

❑ **PLUS – UNDERFLOOR & BUILDING PROJECTIONS:** Enclose or cover all underfloor areas and projections (e.g., first floor bay windows, homes on piers; excluding decks) with noncombustible materials.

8. DECKS & PATIOS WITHIN 30 FEET (if present)

❑ **PLUS – 0-30 FT NONCOMBUSTIBLE DECKS (DETACHED OR ATTACHED):**

Decks must meet **one** of the following options:

❑ **Option 1: NEW DECK (Fully Noncombustible):**

- All components must be made of noncombustible materials (lightweight concrete, tile, stone, pavers, brick, aluminum), including joists.
- Walking surfaces must be solid (no gaps).

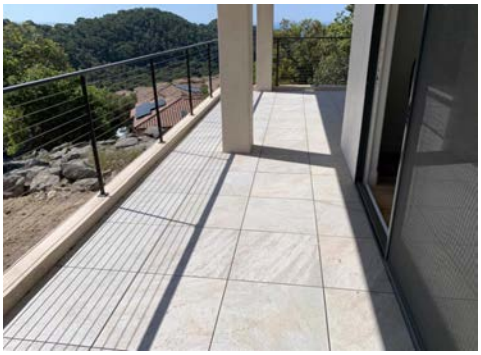
❑ **Option 2: RETROFIT EXISTING DECK:**

All of the following must be completed:

- **Walking Surface:** Replace with solid (no gaps), noncombustible material.
- **Hand Railings (within 5 feet of home):** Must be noncombustible, including where attached to the home.
- **Posts & Stairs 6-inch Base:**

o Provide at least 6 inches of vertical noncombustible material at the base of posts and stairs. *(e.g., metal flashing or fiber-cement board)*

o If deck is 4 feet or less you will not need 6 inches of noncombustible material on the post under the deck, because you will need to enclose the entire area beneath it.



- **Stairs (attached to deck):**

Stairs must meet one of the following:

- **Stairs Over 4 Feet Wide (and less than 4 feet above ground, open underneath):**

o Enclose the area underneath with **1/8-inch corrosion-resistant metal mesh**.

o Provide **6 inches of noncombustible material** at the base.

o Use closed risers: Treads and risers must be solid (no gaps), noncombustible material.

- **All other stairs:**

o Provide **6 inches of noncombustible material** at the base.

o Treads must be solid (no gaps) and noncombustible.

o If risers are present, they must also be solid and noncombustible.

Note: *These requirements are in addition to Structure Requirements in the Base (Essential) Level.*

PLUS (ENHANCED): DEFENSIBLE SPACE REQUIREMENTS



9. DETACHED STRUCTURES

❑ **PLUS – 0-30 FT: NO STRUCTURES WITHIN 30 FEET:**

- Remove or relocate all detached structures (e.g., sheds, pergolas, playsets, detached carports, garages, ADUs) so they are at least **30 feet from the home**.



10. BACK-TO-BACK COMBUSTIBLE FENCING

❑ **PLUS – 0-30 FT: NO BACK-TO-BACK FENCING WITHIN 30 FT:**

- Combustible fences that run parallel (back-to-back) and are less than 5 feet apart, must be removed, or modified by replacing one fence with a noncombustible material.
- **Note:** *You may need to coordinate with your neighbor to meet this requirement.*