

Fall Into Fire Safety

Don't Let Cooler Weather Fool You—Wildfire Season Isn't Over

As autumn arrives and temperatures begin to drop, many Californians breathe a sigh of relief, thinking fire season is over. However, the reality is clear: fall is one of the most dangerous times for wildfires in California. In fact, 12 of the 20 most destructive wildfires in the state's history, including the devastating Camp and Tubbs fires, occurred during the fall months.



Why Fall Fire Risk Is So High

According to The Weather Channel and CAL FIRE experts, several seasonal factors converge to heighten wildfire danger in October:

- **Dry Vegetation:** After months of summer heat, grasses, shrubs, and trees are tinder-dry and highly flammable.
- **Extended Dry Season:** Climate change has prolonged California's dry period, making fall conditions increasingly volatile.
- **Low Humidity:** Autumn is one of the driest times of year, reducing moisture in vegetation and increasing ignition potential.
- **Santa Ana & Diablo Winds:** These powerful, dry offshore winds, common in October, can rapidly spread flames and carry embers miles ahead of a fire front.

Together, these elements create a **"perfect storm"** for wildfire ignition and spread. That's why CAL FIRE urges all residents to stay vigilant and take action now.

Defensible Space: Your First Line of Defense

Creating and maintaining defensible space around your home is one of the most effective ways to reduce wildfire risk. Fall is an ideal time to tackle these tasks:

- **Clear Fallen Leaves & Needles**

Dry debris accumulates quickly in autumn and can ignite easily. Remove it from roofs, gutters, decks, and yards.

- **Replace Flammable Shrubs**

Cooler air and soil make September and October perfect for planting. Opt for fire-resistant choices like low-growing deciduous shrubs, native perennials, and herbaceous groundcovers.

- **Thin Dense Shrub Stands**

Increase spacing between plants to reduce fuel continuity and slow fire spread.

- **Create Space Between Tree Canopies**

Maintain at least **10 feet of clearance** between tree crowns to prevent fire from jumping between them.

- **Remove Low-Hanging Branches**

Prune branches that hang close to the ground, but avoid removing more than the **bottom third** of a tree's height.

- **Establish a Non-Combustible Zone**

Maintain a **5-foot buffer** around your home free of flammable materials. Replace bark mulch with gravel or rock, and remove dead vegetation and pine needles.

Stay Ready, Stay Safe

Fire season doesn't end when the leaves change. Stay proactive, stay informed, and help your community stay fire-safe this fall. For more tips and resources, visit www.fire.ca.gov.

