

# GOT DEFENSIBLE SPACE?

**Defensible Space** is an area either natural or man-made, where material capable of allowing a fire to spread unchecked has been treated, cleared or modified to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire and to create an area for the fire suppression operations to occur. Minimum distances for modification are generally 30 to 100ft from structures. Clearance distances, type of vegetation and topographic features influence factors in determining adequate green belts and fire fuel breaks around structures.

**Determining Risk:** We want to help you identify the items that may be posing an unnecessary risk to your family and your property. The some risk factors can be influenced by: *Aspect*-This is the direction in which the face of the slope is situated; *Slope*- This is the most predominant angle of the hillside measured in % of slope, on the site that the structure is located on; and *Vegetation* or easily ignitable *fuel types*- within 0 to 100 feet of a structure.



**Plant Spacing and Separation:** Regardless of plant selection, shrubs should be spaced so that no continuity exists between the ground fuels and tree crowns. Tree crowns should be separated by at least 10 feet. Separate individual shrub crowns by at least two times the height or clump shrubs into islands. Separate the islands by a distance of no less than two times the canopy height.

**Good Plants - Bad Plants Lists:** Use only fire safe plants within the defensible space area. Select from the University of California Cooperative Extension *Pyrophytic vs. Fire Resistant Plants* brochure, select use of native, domestic or combination thereof that best suits the architectural and planning design of the proposed project. Slope, soil type, deer resistance, and drought resistance should be considered when selecting plant types. Native grasses should be removed from defensible space areas. The UC plant list is available online at [www.novatofire.org](http://www.novatofire.org)

**Call the Novato Fire District today for a free site assessment of your property.  
415.878.2690**

## PLANTS TO AVOID —

### IMPORTANT NOTE: REMOVE THESE PYROPHYTIC PLANTS FROM YOUR PROPERTY!

*Partial list only—Native Grasses, Junipers, Firs, Bamboo, Fountain Grass, Rosemary, Broom, Pampas Grass, Coyote Brush, Manzanita, Pines, Acacia, Eucalyptus, California Bay, Japanese Honeysuckle, Dry Palm Fronds, Cedars, and False Cypress*

## FIRE RESISTIVE CONSTRUCTION IS REQUIRED FOR NEW BUILDINGS, REMODELS, AND ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS FOR PROPERTY LOCATED IN THE WUI

**Permits are required** by the city of Novato and/or the County of Marin building divisions for remodels, alterations, and repairs to buildings that are located in the WUI. Please refer Novato Fire Protection Standard #222 online at [www.novatofire.org](http://www.novatofire.org), and contact your local building division for details.

### Here's WHY...



#### NEW WINDOWS or WINDOW REPLACEMENTS

- Large, annealed glass, single paned picture windows can allow radiant energy from burning vegetation or an adjacent burning structure to ignite flammable materials inside a structure – even if the window remains intact.
- Typically, the glass in large windows is heated unevenly causing it to shatter, allowing firebrands into the building.
- Tempered glass and double or triple pane glazing also provides increased resistance to shattering.



#### ROOFING AND ROOF GUTTERS

- Use fire resistive roofing materials such as steel, aluminum, concrete, tile, or Class "A" composition which resist ignition.
- Install concrete, clay or manmade roofing tiles so that sparks and embers cannot get under them by falling or being blown into cracks or spaces between them.
- Solid sheathing (minimum of 5/8" thick plywood or particle board) under the roofing material dramatically increases a roof's resistance to ignition, in addition to providing a barrier to burning embers that can penetrate between roof tiles.
- Gutters should always be metal; plastic gutters may ignite at low temperatures, or melt.
- Gutter screens, or non-clog gutters should be used to prevent accumulation of leaves and other combustibles. Gutters can accumulate leaves and needles that can easily be ignited by firebrands.



#### EAVE PROTECTION AND ATTIC VENTILATION

- Eaves can interrupt the flow of wind, creating eddies that can trap leaves and other debris; or where burning embers can accumulate.
- Eave and cornice vents are not allowed unless they resist intrusion of flames and burning embers to the attic.
- Eaves should be "boxed in" with rafter tails enclosed with smooth, fire resistant materials.



#### DECKS or REPLACEMENT OF DECK SURFACES

- Build decks of ignition resistant materials, heavy timber, using steel posts, girders and joists.
- Remove flammable vegetation to the downhill side of decking.
- Decks should be skirted with metal or other ignition resistant materials to keep heat from under them.
- Avoid storage of combustible materials under decks.



#### EXTERIOR WALL REPAIRS & REPLACEMENTS

- Metal siding and stucco will not burn or melt in typical wildfire temperatures
- Fire resistant exterior coverings such as steel, aluminum, stone, brick, stucco, or manmade siding materials should always be underlain with solid sheathing, just like roofing materials.
- Wood shingles and other flammable siding add to the odds that may already favor fire.
- Vinyl siding is not recommended, as it melts at very low temperatures, exposing what is underneath to the possibility of ignition.

In an effort to provide homeowners, industries, designers, local fire and building officials a list of "compliant WUI products", the State Fire Marshal is publishing a "WUI Products Handbook". To review the most recent copy go to: <http://www.osfm.fire.ca.gov/strucfireengineer/pdf/bml/wuiproducs.pdf>

# Mulch Matters!

The Novato Fire District has been experiencing fires in *shredded mulch* used in homeowner landscapes and median strips. At first glance, many community members may dismiss these fires as insignificant.

However, *shredded mulch* is readily ignitable. It acts like a catcher's mitt for burning embers and fire brands. When the mulch is burning, it then provides a concentrated source of additional "fire-brands"; burning material that can travel hundreds of yards and spread fire into unburned areas.

For these reasons, *shredded mulch* is **prohibited** in landscaped areas of new homes and for homes with substantial remodels located within the WUI areas. For existing homes inside and outside of the WUI, the Novato Fire District strongly recommends that property owners **do not use shredded mulch** within their landscaped and garden areas; use ignition resistant ground cover material like chunk or piece bark, or plantings instead. For more information, visit [www.novatofire.org](http://www.novatofire.org).



Shredded (prohibited)



Mini (OK)



Chips (OK)



Pathway (OK)



Novato Fire Protection District  
95 Rowland Way  
Novato, CA 94945

# Novato Fire Protection District

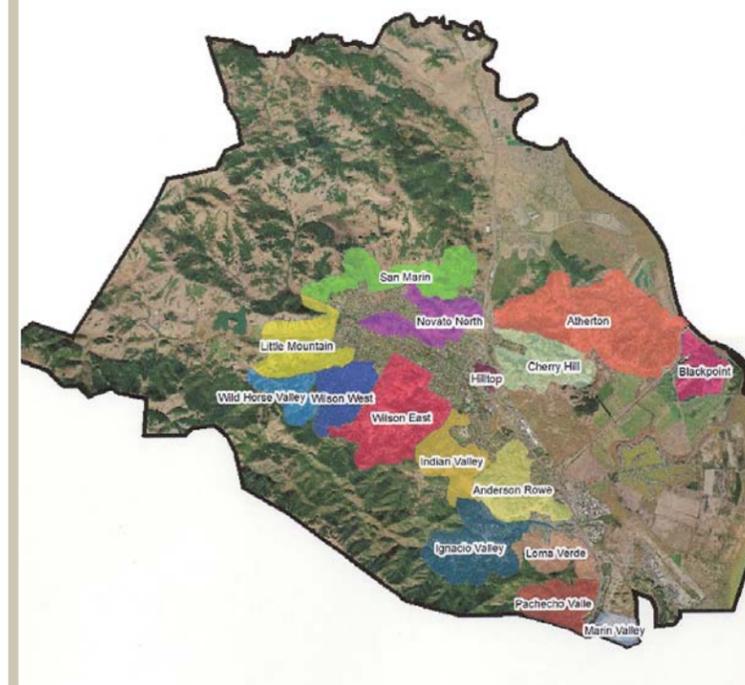


## Message From The Fire Chief Marc Revere

SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITY...

Protecting the Novato community from wildfire is a *shared* responsibility. If you are receiving this bulletin, then your home or property is located within a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area. WUI, commonly pronounced "Woo-Eee," is defined as, "a geographical area where structures and other human development meets or intermingles with wildland or vegetative fuels."

This means that as a community we recognize certain hazards and risks associated from wildland fires to life and property in these areas. The intent of defining this area in our community is to create a comprehensive set of reasonable and concrete steps that the community can take over time to mitigate the risks to life and property from the intrusion of fire from wildland exposures, fire from adjacent structures, and to prevent a structure fire from spreading to wildland fuels.



Local ordinances addressing the WUI are founded on principles intended to mitigate the hazard from fires through provisions that adequately protect public health, safety and welfare; provisions that do not unnecessarily increase construction costs; and provisions that do not restrict or give preferential treatment to particular types or classes of materials, the use of new materials, products or methods of construction.

Together as we face the 2009 Fire Season, and future fire seasons, keep yourselves informed, aware, and prepared for ways that you and your neighbors can reduce the threat of wildland fire. The Novato Fire Protection District exists to care for, protect, and serve our community.

To see a list of properties located in the WUI area by parcel # or by address,

Go to [www.novatofire.org](http://www.novatofire.org)