

CARMEL VIEWS FIREWISE DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Nov. 13, 2021

On Nov. 13, about 30 Carmel Views residents joined local fire experts on exterior tours of three Carmel Views homes to learn more about how they can protect their homes and property from wildfires. Leading the tour were Battalion Chief Josh Silveira, Fuels Specialist Shayon Ascarie, and firefighters from the Cypress Fire Protection District and Richard Bates who coordinates Firewise for the Fire Safe Council for Monterey County.

Here are some nuggets of wisdom overheard by the Firewise team that you may not have heard or read elsewhere:

- Wildfires that are miles away can loft big embers into the air that can threaten your home. Think of embers the size of pine cones. These can ignite combustible bark, plants, or objects stored next to homes or under decks and spread fire quickly.
- When firefighters approach your home, you don't want it to look like a "lost cause." Manicured landscapes with 10' of clearance below large trees and lower branches removed from bushes are more defensible.
- Wood siding makes a home more vulnerable to wildfire but can cost \$50K or more to replace with stucco or concrete composite siding. Keeping 5 feet immediately around your home a non-combustible zone free of organic much and flammable vegetation can significantly reduce the ignition risks even of homes with wood siding.
- Single-paned windows allow a direct transfer of radiant heat into a home's interior that can ignite curtains and blinds.
- After felling trees, the trunks can be left in place if they are treated in ways that will speed decay. That means the trunk should be fully in contact with the ground, cut into shorter logs, and then cut or drilled on the upper surface to allow penetration of water and insects. But don't position logs on steep slopes where they can roll downhill.
- "Double privacy" lattice is a less expensive material for skirting the underside of a wooden deck. But, if you can't add skirting, the next best approach is to keep the area under the deck clear of vegetation or accumulations of pine needles, oak leaves, or other debris. Also, don't store anything under your deck.
- Firefighters need to be able to identify and access your home. Use lettering that is 4" high by 2" wide for your address numbers. Clear vegetation to a height of 12' high and 10' wide along your driveway to allow entry by fire trucks.

- One of the least expensive and most effective ways of protecting your home is to replace the vent covers over openings to your attic and basement. New retrofit vent covers are available through Home Depot and other vendors that have 1/8-inch or 1/16-inch wire mesh covered by metal louvers.
- Firefighters expect that, because fire regimes are intensifying, soon the entire state of California will be designated a high fire frequency area.
- Certain plants act like gasoline to a fire. Juniper, coyote bush, and bottlebrush are a few in that category. Don't plant them close to your home. Consider removing and replacing them if they are already there. While succulents are generally a good landscaping choice, ice plant isn't, because dense stands catch embers. Firefighters also see stands of *Gentista* (broom) as a fire initiator and accelerant: All homeowners should eradicate *Genista* from their yards.
- Valley Hills Nursery (on Carmel Valley Road) now has a section for "firescaping" plants that are less flammable. You can also find lists of more and less flammable plants on the websites for the Fire Safe Council for Monterey County <https://www.firesafemonterey.org/plant-lists.html> Fire Safe Marin also provides good guidance on how to design a firesafe landscape <https://firesafemarin.org/create-a-fire-smart-yard/> .