

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



San Mateo & Santa Cruz Unit

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CAL FIRE Suspends Backyard Burns in SANTA CRUZ County

FELTON - California is entering its second consecutive dry year and braces for what could be another devastating [wildfire](#) season. While wildfires are a natural part of California's landscape, the fire season in California and across the West is starting earlier and ending later each year. Climate change is considered a key driver of this trend. Warmer spring and summer temperatures, reduced snowpack, and earlier spring snowmelt create longer and more intense dry seasons that increase moisture stress on vegetation and make forests more susceptible to severe wildfire.

The increasing fire danger posed by dead grass and hotter, drier conditions in the region is prompting CAL FIRE to end this year's backyard burn season within the State Responsibility Area of SANTA CRUZ COUNTY. This suspension takes effect MAY 1, 2021 and bans all residential outdoor burning of landscape debris such as branches and leaves **without a burn permit issued by CAL FIRE.**

"Last year, California experienced its most destructive fire season in the states known history. Together, we must continue to adapt and evolve to be able to withstand the intensity of these fires, keeping in mind, that the only way to minimize the damage they cause is through education, prevention and mitigation efforts," said Chief Thom Porter, CAL FIRE Director. "We are relying on the public to be ready."

"It is important for the public to be fire ready. With the below average precipitation received this year the vegetation drying much faster, it will be ready to burn earlier in the season. Be prepared, have a plan and practice that plan before a fire occurs," said Chief Ian Larkin, Unit Chief for CAL FIRE San Mateo-Santa Cruz.

Since January 1, 2021 CAL FIRE and firefighters across the state have already responded to over 1,354 wildfires. While outdoor burning of landscape debris by homeowners is no longer allowed, CAL FIRE is asking residents to take that extra time to ensure that they are prepared for wildfires by maintaining a minimum of 100 feet of Defensible Space around every home and buildings on their property and being prepared to evacuate if the time comes.

Here are some tips to help prepare homes and property:

- Clear all dead and or dying vegetation 100 feet from around all structures.
- Landscape with fire resistant plants and non-flammable ground cover.
- Find alternative ways to dispose of landscape debris like chipping or hauling it to a biomass energy or green waste facility

The department may issue restricted temporary burning permits if there is an essential reason due to public health and safety. Agriculture, land management, fire training, and other industrial-type burning may proceed if a CAL FIRE official inspects the burn site and issues a special permit.

The suspension of backyard burns for residential landscape debris does not apply to campfires within organized campgrounds or on private property. Campfires may be permitted if the campfire is maintained in such a manner as to prevent its spread to the wildland. A campfire permit can be obtained at local fire stations or online at PreventWildfireCA.org.

For additional information on how to create Defensible Space, Home Hardening, Evacuation Planning and how to be prepared for wildfires, as well as tips to prevent wildfires, visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org.

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