

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

May 1, 2020 – With 2020 starting out with February being the driest month since the 1850's in California, warming temperatures and winds are quickly drying out the annual grass crop. The increasing fire danger posed by dead grass and hotter, drier conditions in the region is prompting CAL FIRE to suspend all Backyard Burns for outdoor residential burning within the State Responsibility Area of **SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**. This suspension takes effect **MAY 1, 2020** and bans all residential outdoor burning of landscape debris such as branches and leaves **without a burn permit issued by CAL FIRE**.

“The last few years saw devastating reminder’s that the public cannot let their guard down. 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 mitigate the damage they cause is through prevention and preparation,” said Chief Thom Porter, CAL FIRE director. “The potential is great for the dry, hot weather that fueled the massive fires over the last few years will return again this year, so it is up to the public to be ready.”

Since January 1, 2020 CAL FIRE and firefighters across the state have already responded to over 800 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, on how to be prepared for wildfires, as well as tips to prevent wildfires, visit www.ReadyForWildfire.org.

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