



Cambria Wildfire Readiness: It Starts with You

Fire Doesn't Stop at the Fence Line. Neither Should Preparedness.

Cambria is in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, surrounded by dense wildland vegetation, which increases the potential for rapid fire spread. Additionally, narrow roads and limited access routes can complicate evacuation efforts and hinder emergency response. In such settings, creating and maintaining defensible space around properties is vital.

Plan with your family and coordinate with neighbors to ensure everyone is ready to evacuate and respond safely during a fire emergency. Cambria's older population and smaller household sizes make strong community networks essential. Building these connections and proactively preparing greatly improves your chances of surviving wildfires and minimizing damage.

Noncompliant Homes Face Higher Destruction Risk

A 2019 analysis by CAL FIRE examined the seven largest wildfires in California during 2017 and 2018 and found that structures not compliant with defensible space regulations were approximately five times more likely to be destroyed by wildfire than compliant ones.

Community Participation Matters

Research on wildfire evacuations emphasizes the importance of social ties in facilitating evacuation. Communities with strong neighborly connections often experience more efficient and effective evacuations, as residents can share information, resources, and assistance.

Takeaway for Cambria Residents and Property Owners

- Create and maintain defensible space around properties.
- Harden homes using fire-resistant materials.
- Develop and coordinate evacuation plans with family and neighbors.

Remember, wildfire preparedness is a shared responsibility. Your actions matter—not only to protect your own property but also to strengthen the entire community's resilience. By staying vigilant, maintaining defensible space, and supporting one another, we increase everyone's chances of surviving and recovering from wildfire events.



Wildfires move fast. Be ready to go at a moment's notice.

Create a "Go Bag" for every household member, including: - Copies of ID, insurance, medical and property documents, Medications and first-aid supplies, Food and water (at least 3 days' worth), Clothing, sturdy shoes, and hygiene items, Flashlight, batteries, phone charger, Pet food and carriers, special items for infants, seniors, or people with disabilities.

Have a Family Evacuation Plan: - Know two routes out of your neighborhood, set up a meeting point if separated, practice loading and evacuating in under 15 minutes, and ensure pets are included in your plan.

Have a Neighborhood Evacuation plan: - This works alongside our local emergency plans by focusing on how neighbors in your specific area can stay connected, share information, and safely evacuate together during an emergency.

Create Defensible Space: - Weed abatement and fuel reduction help create safer conditions around homes and neighborhoods by removing or reducing flammable vegetation. This slows the spread and intensity of wildfires, which in turn:

1. **Provides More Time to Evacuate:** Slower fire spread means residents have more time to safely gather belongings, load vehicles, and leave the area.
2. **Keeps Roads Clearer and Safer:** Reduced vegetation near roads and driveways decreases the chance of flames or heavy smoke blocking escape routes, making evacuation routes more accessible.

Stay Informed and Compliant

Emergency preparedness steps like family planning, assembling go bags, and communicating with neighbors work hand-in-hand with weed abatement and fuel reduction to create a comprehensive wildfire defense. Together, these actions create multiple layers of protection, reducing fire risk while preparing residents to respond effectively, ultimately saving lives and minimizing damage.

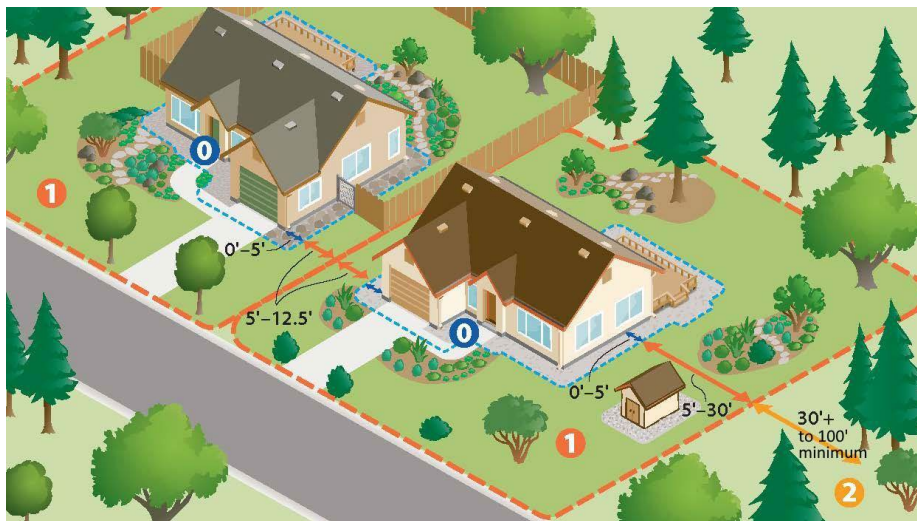
Defensible Space & Weed Abatement: What You Need to Know

Defensible space involves creating a buffer between a structure and the surrounding vegetation, which helps to slow or halt the spread of wildfire. Creating defensible space is not just smart, it's required by law under California Public Resources Code 4291 and the Cambria Community Services District's Weed Abatement Ordinance Section 6.05.40.



CCSD Ordinance Section 6.05.40 Cambria residents must comply with the Weed Abatement Standards adopted in CCSD Ordinance Section 6.05.40 by clearing dry vegetation on both developed and vacant lots, maintaining defensible space within 100 feet from structures, clearing 50 feet inward from property lines and roadways, and maintaining 10 feet of clearance from driveways. Noncompliance can lead to abatement fees, citations, or liens. If your land qualifies for exemptions (e.g., habitat, agriculture, preserve), you must notify the Fire Department 30 days before the weed abatement deadline. This local ordinance is part of Cambria's broader effort to protect our community from wildfires.

What is Defensible Space?



Defensible space is the area around your home or building that's cleared or managed to reduce fire risk. It acts as a buffer between structures and flammable vegetation, helping protect your property and giving firefighters a safer space to work. In California, defensible space is divided into three zones around a structure, each designed to reduce fire intensity and improve wildfire defense.

Three Zones of Defensible Space:

Zone 0: 0–5 feet (Immediate Zone)

Keep this area clear of all flammable materials such as wood mulch, shrubs, dead leaves, and firewood. Use only noncombustible materials like gravel, decomposed granite, or concrete. Avoid placing plants under eaves, decks, or exterior walls, as these areas are especially vulnerable during a wildfire.



Zone 1: 5–30 feet (Lean, Clean & Green Zone)

Remove all dead plants, grass, and weeds to reduce fire fuel. Trim trees so branches are at least 10 feet away from roofs and each other. Shrubs should be pruned and spaced apart to minimize the risk of fire spreading. Lawns and groundcover should be kept green and maintained at a height of under 4 inches.

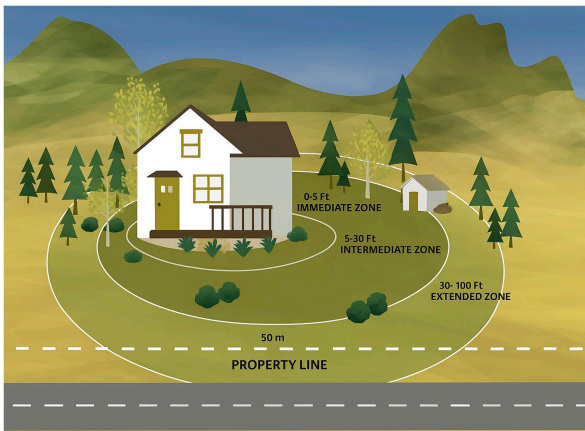
Zone 2: 30–100 feet (Reduced Fuel Zone)

Grasses should be mowed to a height of 4 inches or less. Maintain horizontal and vertical spacing between plants and trees to slow fire spread. Clear away fallen branches, pine needles, and accumulated leaf litter. Trim lower tree limbs to reduce the chances of fire climbing into the canopy.

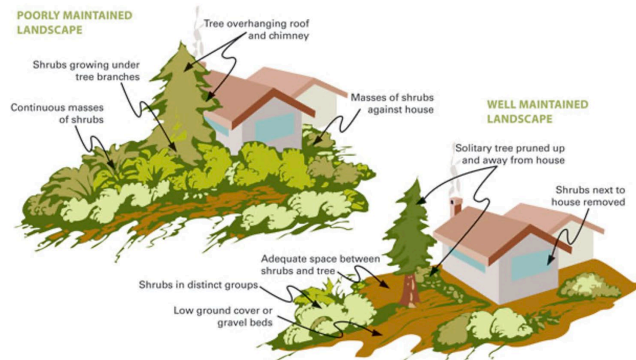
If your property extends more than 100 feet from your house, you are still required to clear vegetation within the 100-foot defensible space zone, clearing 50 feet inward from property lines and adjacent roadways, and maintaining 10 feet of clearance from driveways. This includes the right-of-way (ROW) closest to your property or home.

Defensible Space

Zones (0–100 ft):



Landscaping Comparison



When Your Parcel Borders Other Properties

In Cambria, where properties are often close together and surrounded by dense vegetation, each property owner’s defensible space contributes to the safety of the entire neighborhood. If vegetation near the edge of your property isn’t cleared, fire can jump easily to or from a neighbor’s home or land, increasing risk for everyone.



It doesn't matter if your house is more than 100 feet from the edge of your property—you are still required to clear hazardous vegetation 50 feet inward from your property lines and 50 feet inward from adjacent roadways. If the land next to you is exempt or not well-maintained, your cleared buffer becomes even more critical to slowing or stopping the spread of fire toward your home.

Key points:

- It does *not* mean you should clear your neighbor's property. All abatement for which you are responsible is limited to your property and the area between your property line and the adjacent roadway.
- You are responsible for 100 feet out from your structure or to your property line, whichever is closer.
- If your property extends beyond 100 feet from your structure, you are responsible for vegetation within 50 feet inward of your own property line.
- You are responsible for vegetation 50 feet inward from adjacent roadways.

What Does “Clear 50 Feet Inward from the Property Line” Really Mean?

If your home is more than 100 feet from the edge of your lot, you are required to clear vegetation on your land 50 feet inward from all property lines, not just within the 100-foot defensible space zone surrounding your house.

When In Doubt:

- Picture a 50-foot zone around the entire inside edge of your property – front, sides, and back.
- That entire 50-foot buffer must be cleared of weeds, tall grasses, dead brush, and ladder fuels – even if it's far from your home.
- Remember, you are only clearing your property, not your neighbor's.

Are you required to clear 50 feet inward from the roadway?

Yes, the right-of-way (ROW) is the strip of land along public roads, often between the edge of pavement and your actual property line. While the County owns this land, it typically requires you, the adjacent property owner, to maintain it, including weed abatement.

This includes:

- Keeping the ROW clear of dry vegetation and overgrowth
- Trimming branches that block visibility or access
- Mowing or maintaining roadside shoulders in front of your property



This helps create a buffer zone to slow or stop wildfire spread near structures, roads, and neighboring properties. This applies whether the adjacent property is developed or vacant.

Area	Who Owns It?	Who Maintains It?
Your Property	You	You maintain 50 feet inward from each property boundary line and 100 feet outward from your structure.
County Right-of-Way (ROW)	County of SLO	You maintain 50 feet inward from the nearest adjacent roadway to your property boundary, unless otherwise stated by the County

Who is Responsible if My Neighbor's Land is Exempt?

If the land next to your property is exempt from weed abatement, such as a nature preserve, pasture, or designated scenic open space, the property owner or managing agency is responsible for maintaining that land. If you believe this property to be unmaintained without an approved exemption, contact the Cambria Fire Department.

Cambria Community Services District's Ordinance 01-2025 states: When land *is* developed or occupied (like with a house or structure), then the owner or person in control of that improved land is the one responsible for maintaining defensible space.

Bottom line: You should only extend maintenance beyond your own property when clearing vegetation up to the adjacent roadway, not onto your neighbor's private property unless you've made arrangements with the adjacent property owner. However, you must maintain vegetation up to your side of the property line, even if the land next door isn't being cleared.

Summary of Abatement Requirements (Even Past 100 ft):

- Maintain 50 feet of clearance inward from each property line, regardless of your home's 100-foot defeasible space boundary.
- You are responsible for vegetation 50 feet inward from adjacent roadways.
- Remove weeds, dead vegetation, and ladder fuels.
- This is especially important within 30 feet of any structure, or up to your property line if it's closer. You can keep well-maintained trees and fire-wise ornamental plants within this zone, as long as they don't create a path for fire to spread rapidly to nearby structures.
- Protect the environment by avoiding unnecessary clearing—mark native plants and seedlings.
- Protect wildlife with careful abatement practices.



- Know your boundaries: You're responsible for clearing up to your property line and into the right-of-way (ROW) next to your property—but not on your neighbor's land, even if it's undeveloped or exempt.
- No exemptions apply unless the Fire Chief grants one; requests must be submitted 30 days before the weed abatement deadline.

If You Do Not Comply

- • Your property may be declared a fire hazard
- • You could be fined or charged for cleanup
- • A lien may be placed on your property to recover costs

Hardening Your Home Against Embers

In wildfires, 90% of homes ignite due to wind-blown embers. You can reduce your home's vulnerability with simple upgrades:

- Install ember-resistant vent screens (1/8" metal mesh)
- Clean roofs and gutters regularly
- Replace wood roofs with Class A fire-rated materials
- Use noncombustible siding (stucco, fiber-cement, metal).
- Remove leaves, pine needles, and other flammable materials from decks, patios, and underneath these areas.
- Install tempered glass or multi-pane windows
- Use non-combustible materials for fencing near structures

2025 Cambria Fire Hazard Fuel Reduction Program (FHFRP-Vacant Parcels)

The Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) Fire Department is conducting its annual Fire Hazard Fuel Reduction Program (FHFRP). This program helps reduce the fire danger on vacant parcels caused by the buildup of dry, flammable materials. While reducing fire hazards is essential, we also recognize the importance of preserving Cambria's natural scenic beauty, wildlife, and forest health.

Unlike developed parcels, undeveloped parcels must be maintained for fuel reduction across the entire property, not just within a 100-foot zone. In addition, you are still required to maintain vegetation within 50 feet inward from the edge of the nearest adjacent roadway and follow specific guidelines within 30 feet of any neighboring structure.

Please Follow These Guidelines to Stay in Compliance:

- Remove trash and other piles of combustible materials from your parcel.
- Trim weeds and annual grasses to a maximum of 4 inches.



- Avoid creating bare soil or increasing erosion risk.
- Remove downed trees, limbs, or stumps within 30 feet of any structure. Cut logs should not extend more than six feet into this zone. Note that this applies even if the structure within this 30-foot zone is not on your property.
- In the area beyond 30 feet from any neighboring structure, you can leave fallen trees larger than 12 inches in diameter, but only if the entire trunk is flat on the ground.
- However, if the fallen tree or branch is smaller than 12 inches in diameter, it must be removed, even if it's lying flat.
- Remove all dead trees that are hazardous to nearby buildings or infrastructure.
- Ladder fuels include tall grass, shrubs, low tree branches, and dead plant matter. Clear ladder fuels beneath trees and shrubs.
- For trees taller than 20 feet, maintain at least 6 feet of clearance from the ground to the lowest branches. If shrubs are growing beneath trees, ensure there is 6 to 10 feet of vertical space between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branches. This helps break up "ladder fuels," making it more difficult for fire to climb from the ground into the tree canopy.
- Remove invasive or hazardous vegetation, including Poison Oak, Scotch/Irish/French Broom, Pampas or Jubata Grass, Crocosmia (Fire Weed).
- Plants spaced 10 feet apart are considered isolated, helping prevent fire spread. Choosing fire-resistant, well-spaced plants can slow wildfires.

Important Notes for Property Owners

- Mark native trees, ferns, and seedlings you wish to preserve before any work is done.
- You are responsible for maintaining your property. Coordinate with contractors to ensure the Fire Department inspects your parcel before the deadline.
- Non-compliant parcels will be abated by CCSD's contractor at the owner's expense.
- Costs include the contractor's fee plus:
 - \$100 administrative charge (if paid within 90 days)
 - \$200 administrative charge (if paid after 90 days)

Key Requirements

- **Deadline:** All weed abatement must be completed by the posted deadline (<https://www.cambriacsd.org/2025-fire-hazard-fuel-reduction-program>).
- **No Extensions:** There are no extensions. Regardless of what you may hear from a contractor, the deadline is final.
- **Repeat Abatement May Be Required:** Regrowth may require a second abatement to pass inspection.

Helpful Resources: - Sign up for CCSD News: www.cambriacsd.org - Learn more: www.readyforwildfire.org - Cambria Fire Department: (805) 927-6240



Abate With Care:

- Removing vegetation to reduce fire risk can negatively impact a variety of Sensitive wildlife species if not done carefully.
- Ground-nesting birds, such as California quail, wild turkeys, and mourning doves, often nest in tall grasses or low shrubs.
- California red-legged frog (Federally threatened), found in moist grasslands and near seasonal ponds.
- Fawns are often left alone by their mothers during the day and may lie quietly in shaded or grassy areas.

General Steps for Protecting All Species

- Walk the area slowly before starting.
- Use a stick, rake, or pole to gently rustle or part tall grass, leaf piles, or shrubs, giving animals a chance to flee.
- Work in sections and inspect each zone before cutting or removing vegetation.
- Start in the center and work outward to give animals a chance to escape.
- Avoid working very early in the morning or dusk when many animals are resting or are less visible.

Steps to Stay in Compliance:

- Perform regular, year-round property checks.
- Remove flammable weeds and debris, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 14875.
- Properly dispose of green waste to reduce fire risks and prevent the spread of invasive species.

California Health and Safety Code Section 14875 allows local agencies to require property owners to remove hazardous vegetation, such as dry weeds, overgrown grasses, invasive brush, or any plant that poses a fire danger. In Cambria, this law applies to both developed and undeveloped parcels. If you own an undeveloped lot, you are still responsible for removing hazardous vegetation to reduce fire risk. This includes abatement along the right-of-way between your property and the nearest roadway. Fire hazard fuel reduction must be implemented with care to protect our unique Monterey pine forest. The focus is on reducing fire risk, not removing vegetation unnecessarily. The intent is to mitigate fire-prone fuels while preserving the forested landscape and the biodiversity that defines Cambria's natural environment.

Keep Connected: - How to Join the CCSD Mailing List

Follow these simple steps to subscribe to the Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) mailing list and stay informed about critical updates.



Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Visit the CCSD Website: Go to <https://www.cambriacsd.org>
2. Scroll to the Bottom of the Page or scroll to the footer section on any page.
3. Click on "Join Our Mailing List": Look for the "Join our mailing list" link at the bottom.
4. Enter Your Email Address: Fill in your valid email address in the subscription form.
5. Select the Updates You Wish to Receive: Choose from categories like:
 - Board Agendas
 - Cambria CSD Fire Department News & Updates
 - Water & Wastewater News & Updates
 - Facilities & Resources News & Updates
 - Administration News & Updates
 - Emergency Notifications
 - Current News
 - Notices
 - Press Releases
6. Complete the CAPTCHA Verification: Follow the on-screen instructions to verify.
7. Click "Sign Up": Finalize your subscription by clicking the "Sign Up" button.

Additional Tips

- Stay Informed on Cambria CSD Fire Department Updates: Select 'Cambria CSD Fire Department News & Updates' to receive fire-related updates, including the Fire Hazard Fuel Reduction Program.
- Follow CCSD Fire on Social Media:
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cambriafiredepartment/>
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Cambriafire>
- Privacy Assurance: Your email will only be used to send selected updates. You can unsubscribe at any time using the link in any email.

Community Liaisons

New Online Sign-Up Option for Liaisons:

We're adding a new feature to our website, allowing community members to sign up online to become a Community Liaison. This tool makes it easier to invite neighbors, friends, or anyone interested in actively participating in community readiness. Please share the link and encourage others to join our growing network. <https://www.cambriacsd.org/neighborhood-liaison-group>

Community Preparedness Website in Development:

We're currently building a dedicated Community Preparedness website. This site will serve as a centralized hub for emergency planning resources, downloadable materials, training opportunities, and liaison contacts. We look forward to unveiling this tool in the coming months.