



City of Malibu News

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Recent Brushfires Are a Reminder to Malibu Homeowners to Get Their Brush Clearance Complete by the June 1 Deadline

(Malibu CA) – The brushfire in Pacific Palisades is a strong reminder to the Malibu community of the important role that proper brush clearance plays in helping to keep brushfires from rapidly growing into large wildfires that threaten lives and homes.

“The Palisades Fire that is still burning and the numerous small fires in Malibu this year are serious reminders that our next disastrous wildfire is always around the corner,” said Mayor Paul Grisanti. “To those residents who have already completed their brush clearance before the June 1 deadline, I thank you. If you have not yet completed your brush clearance, please act now to protect your home, your neighborhood and your community.”

On June 1, 2021, local Los Angeles County Fire engine companies begin conducting annual brush clearance inspections in Malibu and other coastal communities. Property owners not currently in compliance with brush clearance requirements are strongly urged to come into compliance as soon as possible, both to avoid fines and for the safety of their neighbors.

Brush clearance is an annual obligation for all property owners in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, which includes the entire City of Malibu. These measures help create the “defensible space” that firefighters need to effectively protect life, property and the environment and to protect their own safety. Properties with good defensible space may require no or minimal intervention during a wildfire and stand the best chance of survival.

In conjunction with the annual brush clearance, Malibu homeowners may also request the City’s free wildfire home hardening assessment offered by Fire Safety Liaison Chris Brossard. The Home Ignition Zone Assessment service includes a home inspection by the Fire Safety Liaison who points out vulnerabilities and offers the homeowner a no-obligation checklist of often simple and inexpensive steps that can prevent embers from igniting a home during a wildfire. Strong winds can send millions of burning embers flying out more than a mile ahead of a firefront and are the leading cause of homes catching fire and burning down during wind-driven wildfires like the Woolsey Fire. The City has conducted more than 200 assessments since the program was launched in 2019.

The Brush Clearance Program is a joint effort between the County of Los Angeles Fire Department and the County of Los Angeles Department of Agricultural Commissioner Weights and Measures, Weed Hazard and Pest Abatement Bureau. This unified enforcement effort has the ability to declare both improved and unimproved properties a public nuisance and, where necessary, require the clearance of hazardous vegetation. Non-compliant properties may be subject to a County administrative fine of \$500 and/or a non-compliance fee of \$648, to be assessed on the property tax bill.

Brush clearance and creating defensible space involves much more than just cutting dead and dry grass at the beginning of summer. It should be an on-going, year-round process that includes:

- Cutting and removing all dead or dying vegetation and grass.
- Modifying existing native vegetation by thinning and removing high-risk plants (laurel sumac, chamise, ceanothus, sage, sage brush, buckwheat and California juniper).
- Removing the lower one-third of large shrubs (lollipops) and all dead wood.
- Spacing out large native shrubs so that there is 15 feet between the edges of their canopies.
- Removing dead or dry leaves and pine needles from yard, roof and rain gutters.
- Trimming trees regularly to keep branches at least 10 feet from other trees and 5-6 feet off the ground.
- Removing dead branches hanging over your roof and keep branches 10 feet away from your chimney.
- Keeping the first five feet around your house as clean as possible. Avoid accumulating combustible materials, keep any vegetation in this area well maintained, spaced apart and avoid the use of mulch or bark (better choices are dirt, gravel, hardscape or decomposed granite).
- Removing vines and climbing plants such as bougainvillea or wisteria from combustible structures.
- Removing or pruning vegetation near windows.
- Removing vegetation and items around and under decks that could catch fire.
- Creating separations between trees, shrubs and items that could catch fire such as patio furniture, swing sets, etc.
- Accessing roads and driveways should be easily accessible and passable by large fire vehicles. This requires a minimum of 15 feet of horizontal clearance and 13.5 feet of vertical clearance from all trees, shrubs and vegetation.

For more information on how to complete brush clearance and get a brush clearance inspection, including a list of vendors, maps, a video and more, visit

<http://www.fire.lacounty.gov/forestry-division/fire-hazard-reduction-programs>.

For questions or concerns related to the Brush Clearance Program, contact local Fire Stations, which are listed on the City website at <https://www.malibucity.org/238/Fire-Department>.

For information on Home Ignition Zone Assessments or general questions you can contact the Fire Safety Liaison at 310-456-2489, ext. 387 or FireSafety@malibucity.org.

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