

Alameda County Consumer Affairs Commission

LA Wildfires & Your Home Insurance

February 13, 2025

Overview

Alameda County has experienced catastrophic wildfire before. It can happen again at any time. This fact sheet will inform you about wildfire risks in our community and how you can use this time to get prepared.



25 Lives, 3,500 Homes Lost in Oakland Hills Fire

Oct. 19-20, 1991, strong winds reignited a small fire that had been extinguished the day before. The blaze spread across 2.5 miles of mostly residential space.

Increased fire risk, an insurance market in flux

Fast forward to the past five years, insurance carriers have vastly increased cancellation rates in neighborhoods exposed to high risk of fire, flood and other hazards.

Insurance Industry Bailout

As private insurers abandon customers with the greatest risk, California has stepped in to shore up the insurer of last resort, known as the FAIR Plan. Policyholders will soon fund half a billion dollars, any additional costs from LA wildfires, future wildfires, and forthcoming rate increases.

Regulatory Reforms Underway

Under Insurance Commission Ricardo Lara, California has proposed a series of reforms to try and bring private insurers back into the market. Home insurance rates can now reflect future impacts of climate change. Insurers can also pass costs of reinsurance to consumers. These new rules are likely to drive up home insurance rates in the years to come.

Ways to Protect Your Home and Your Family

Create defensible space

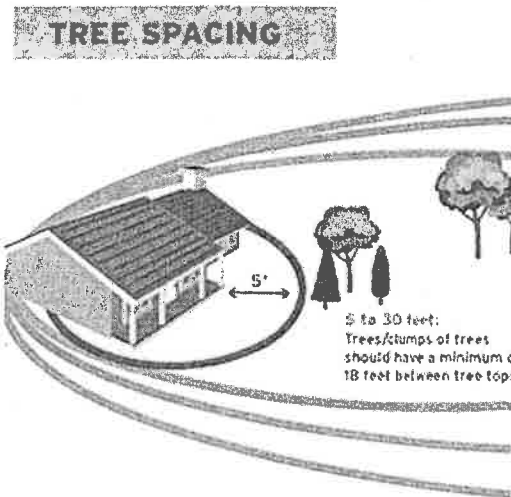
Know your property's fire risk zone and create an ember-resistant buffer. Trim vegetation. Remove debris. Build with fire-resistant materials.

Make a wildfire action plan

Prep for an evacuation with emergency supplies, a designated meeting point. Sign up for emergency alerts. Make sure smoke detectors work. Know where to locate fire extinguishers.

Know your insurance policy

Be sure you have adequate coverage to rebuild. Many victims of fire are surprised to learn they don't. Talk to neighbors about forming a community wildfire prevention group. Know what to do in case of nonrenewal, starting with assistance from the state Dept. of Insurance.



For More Information

Read **Oaklandside's Oakland Wildfire Guide** and **Berkeleyside's Berkeley Wildfire Guide**. Search the **California Dept. of Insurance** wildfire resource page for assistance; the **Firewise USA** program for guidance on reducing wildfire risk; and **United Policyholders** for the latest news and advocacy.