

Fire Safety Outside: Sealing the House

By Cathy Dausman

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of Lamorinda Weekly articles designed to raise awareness and help homeowners secure their homes against the threat of wildfire.)

If “location, location, location” are the watchwords of choosing a good home, then topography, weather and fuels are the corollary to keep your home safe during fire season.

Brush fires, even small ones, are a constant threat, especially when trees and woody shrubs on rolling hills abut back yards. Natural landscaping is the very reason Lamorindans like their outdoors, but late spring rains have done little to relieve the California drought. The entire country knows our fire season has begun in earnest. According to Cal Fire, 1,701 fires have burned 14,925 acres so far this year. Alameda and Contra Costa County lands are now classified as D4, or “exceptional drought” areas.

Recently, local landscape contractors and fire agencies met with the Diablo Fire Safe Council to learn about local fire history, wildfire behavior, ignition pre-

vention techniques, working safely around power lines, and creating defensible space.

The Diablo Fire Safe Council offers a list of five ways to reduce ignition around the home: sweep, remove or store combustibles, caulk and screen. Sweep walkways, patios and decks, gutters and rooflines regularly to remove leaves, pine needles and twigs. Do not store combustible materials under decks.

Consider replacing older decks with a product meeting the Wildland Urban Interface fire safety code. Ensure that siding and windows are fully caulked to prevent embers from entering the home. Store backyard combustible materials inside if a wildfire threatens. Finally, install 1/8-inch mesh metal screens under eaves and at foundation vents – those areas are vulnerable entry points for embers and flames.

For details go to http://www.diablofiresafe.org/preventing_wildfires_house.html.



Using 1/8-inch mesh metal screens under eaves or at foundation vents can prevent burning embers from entering a home.
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