

Be Aware and Prepared

WHAT TO KNOW, WHAT TO DO DURING PEAK FIRE SEASON



Be a Fire Smart Park Visitor
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**Dear
East Bay
Regional
Park
District
Neighbor,**

October is the height of fire season in California. Park District crews have been working diligently this year to clear and reduce potential fire hazards.

We are also grateful for the collective efforts of homeowners and neighbors who have cleared excess plant growth and other fire hazards from their residential areas.

Now is the time for vigilance! We ask park visitors and neighbors to pay attention to each day's park fire restrictions, advisories and warnings, and be prepared in case an evacuation is necessary.

Sincerely,

Aileen Theile
Fire Chief, East Bay Regional Park
District

For more information
on wildfire safety, visit
[www.ebparks.org/
about/fire](http://www.ebparks.org/about/fire).



*Homes burned near Lake Temescal
during the 1991 Oakland Firestorm.*

Strategic Choices

HOW THE PARK DISTRICT MAKES CAREFUL DECISIONS FOR WILDFIRE PROTECTION.

Park visitors and neighbors often inquire about how the Park District manages its resources to protect communities from wildfire. Budgets are always a constraint, necessitating careful, data-driven plans and prioritization. Here are key factors that the Park District considers on both a long-term and daily basis.

History

Large fires historically have occurred every 10 to 20 years. Of all the fires in the East Bay, the 1991 Oakland-Berkeley Hills Fire at the Caldecott Tunnel has been the most devastating. The 1,600-acre fire claimed 25 lives, destroyed 2,900 homes, and caused damages in excess of \$1 billion.

Within a two-mile radius of the Caldecott Tunnel, 15 major fires have burned since the first fire documented in 1923. During the 75 year period between 1923 and 1998, eleven Diablo wind fires alone burned 9,840 acres, destroyed 3,542 homes, and took 26 lives, with over 2 billion dollars in financial losses. When mapped, it becomes apparent that the fires often reoccur in the same general areas and under similar environmental conditions.

Terrain, Ecology, and People

Over time, densely growing non-native grasses, pines, cypress, and eucalyptus trees have invaded the East Bay; thereby, increasing the fire fuel. Park District crews work throughout the year to remove hazardous vegetation. Strategic thinning of forests to create shaded fuel breaks allows more fire-resistant native species such as oaks, bays, and willows to grow.

As the population of the East Bay has expanded, urban development has moved into the wildland spaces. Houses nestled in among mature trees, brush, and other vegetation have become fuels themselves. Wildfire protection efforts must address many factors, including reducing risk in the wildland-urban interface areas, maintaining and enhancing plant and wildlife habitats, and preserving aesthetic landscapes.

Climate Change and Weather

The warming climate is increasing the risk of catastrophic fires. Ten of the most destructive fires in California history have occurred in the past four years, and a year-round fire season is now the 'new normal' in our state.

The East Bay's worst fire weather is created by the late summer/early fall Diablo Winds. These strong, hot, and dry winds sweep through the Bay Area from the northeast and increase the likelihood of a fire by lowering relative humidity and drying out local vegetation.

Ten Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) monitor the weather and provide data for Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Four of these stations are monitored by the Park District; six by other agencies. They supply real-time data about temperatures, dew point, humidity, wind speed, wind direction, precipitation, and more. Fire managers use the data to track weather and predict fire dangers—allowing for public fire-danger notices and the strategic placing of firefighting resources and personnel.

Key Takeaway

Assessing wildfire danger has advanced in recent years to a sophisticated science.

The Park District relies on this science to make informed decisions about staffing, operations, restrictions, and suppression efforts. East Bay residents and park visitors can help by being aware of fire-safety rules and daily conditions.

Be a Fire Smart Park Visitor

GET TO KNOW PARK FIRE RULES, REGULATIONS, AND WARNINGS.

You've probably seen the fire-danger signs in and around East Bay Regional Parks.

As the weather becomes hotter, drier, and windier, all visitors must stay ready for advisories and restrictions due to increased fire risk. Always abide by all posted or announced fire safety rules.

If you see smoke in open parklands, call 9-1-1.

EVERYDAY FIRE RULES

- Smoking is prohibited in Regional Parks, including inhaling, exhaling, burning, or carrying any lighted pipe, cigar, cigarette, marijuana, plant, or other combustible organic or chemical substance.
- Vapor devices that release gas, particles, or vapors into the air (excluding any USDA-approved medication) are prohibited in Regional Parks.
- Use of gasoline-powered equipment (generators) is prohibited.



- Do not drive or park your vehicle on dry grass areas—the heat from a vehicle's undercarriage can ignite a wildfire. Low-hanging chains that drag can also ignite wildfires near dry grass.
- Do not build, light, or maintain any open outdoor fire on park property except in those facilities or areas provided and designated for that purpose.
- Never leave a fire unattended.

- Gas-fueled stoves are permitted under certain conditions:
 - Place the stove in an area that will not scorch, burn, or otherwise damage lawns or tabletops.
 - Keep the stove at least 30 feet from any flammable material such as grass, weeds, wood chips, brush, or buildings.
 - Thoroughly extinguish all burning fuel such as wood or charcoal before disposing of them in an ash receptacle. It is illegal to dispose of coals in garbage cans or refuse bins.



“VERY HIGH” FIRE DANGER RULES

- Barbecues and campfires are ONLY permitted in designated day-use picnic areas, campgrounds, or developed recreational areas.
- Gas-fueled stoves are permitted under required conditions (see left).

“EXTREME” FIRE DANGER RULES

- No open fires, campfires, or barbecues of any type are allowed.
- ONLY gas-fueled stoves are allowed.

PARK CLOSURES

In rare occurrences, parks will close when two things occur:

- The fire department has limited resources to fight a fire.
- The National Weather Service declares a Red Flag Warning—signifying a likelihood of severe lightning storms or hot, dry winds from the east, called Diablo Winds.

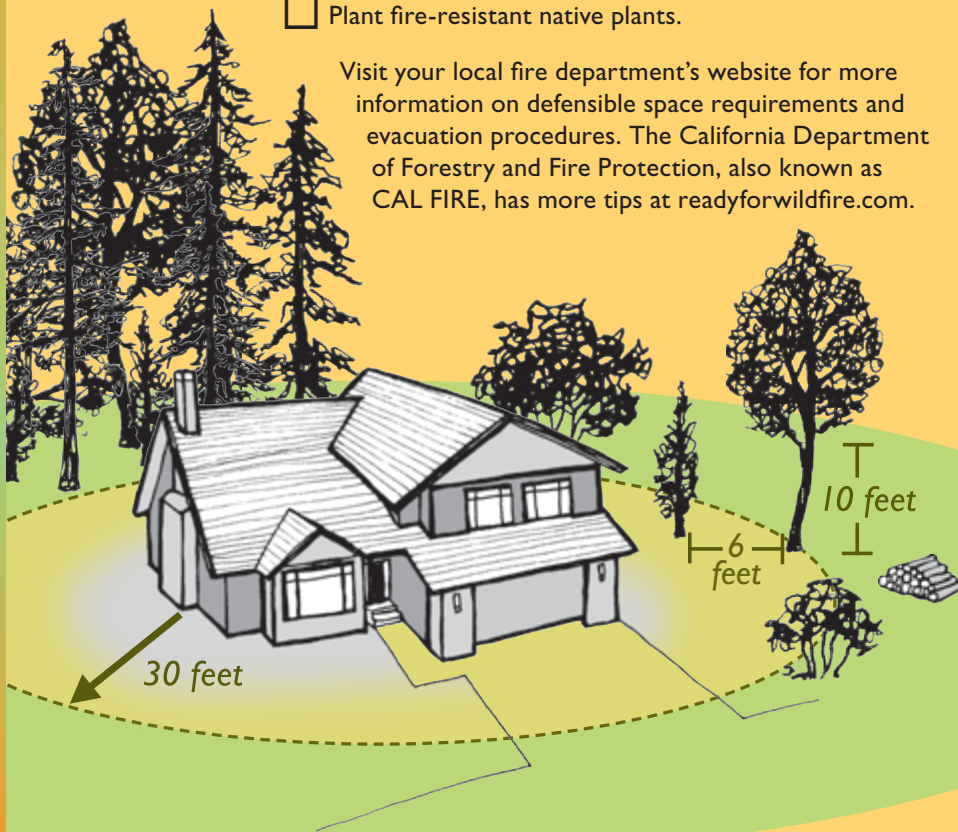
For up-to-date info on fire danger and rules,
visit www.ebparke.org/firewarninginfo
or call (510) 881-1833.

Protect Your Home

USE THIS CHECKLIST TO CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE AROUND YOUR PROPERTY.

- Remove all dead plants, grass, weeds, and overgrown brush.
- Clear away leaves, needles, and debris from roofs and rain gutters.
- Keep tree branches 10 feet away from chimney, roof, and other trees.
- Move firewood and fuel tanks 30 feet away from house.
- Remove all items from under deck. Do not use this space for storage.
- Fire harden your home. Install fine wire mesh over roof, eave, and foundation vents.
- Mow grass to a maximum of 4 inches. Mow before 10 a.m. and never on a hot, windy, or red flag day.
- Create vertical spacing between grass, shrubs, and trees. Trim trees 10 feet from the ground and 6 feet from other plants.
- Create horizontal spacing between trees and shrubs.
- Plant fire-resistant native plants.

Visit your local fire department's website for more information on defensible space requirements and evacuation procedures. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, also known as CAL FIRE, has more tips at readyforwildfire.com.



Evacuation Tips and Resources

BE PREPARED IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.

Here are tips from CAL FIRE for things to do right away to help you survive a disaster.

Create an evacuation plan that includes:

- A designated emergency meeting location outside the fire or hazard area. This is critical to determine who has safely evacuated from the affected area.
- Several different escape routes from your home and community.
- Help for pets and large animals such as horses and other livestock.
- A communication plan that designates an out-of-area friend or relative as a point of contact to act as a single source of communication among family members in case of separation.



Be prepared:

- Have fire extinguishers on hand and train your family on how to use them (check expiration dates regularly).
- Ensure that your family knows where your gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are located and how to safely shut them down in an emergency.
- Assemble an emergency supply kit for each person, as recommended by the American Red Cross.
- Maintain a list of emergency contact numbers posted in your home and in your emergency supply kits.
- Keep an extra emergency supply kit in your car in case you cannot get to your home because of fire or other emergencies.
- Have a portable radio or scanner so you can stay updated on the fire.
- Tell your neighbors about your preparations and urge them to get prepared too.