

PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE

DECKS



INFO

Decks can be an unnoticed fire hazard—a burning deck can ignite siding and the house, or break the glass in doors or windows, allowing fire to gain entry.



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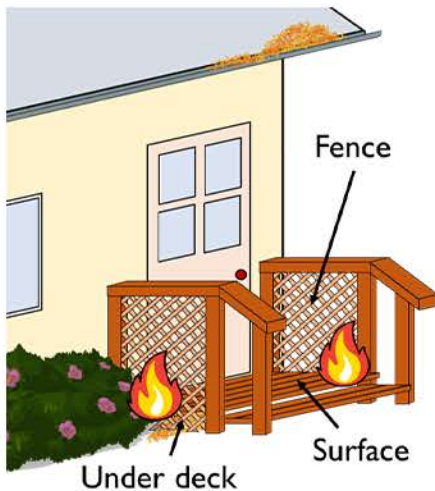
Why are decks important?

Reducing the deck's vulnerability requires a focus on the materials and design features used to build the deck, and creating a noncombustible zone around and importantly, under the deck. Embers may lodge between deck board gaps and where deck boards rest on joists, or they can fall between board gaps and ignite combustible materials stored below.

Surfaces of decks are either solid or constructed using deck boards (with between-board gaps). Solid surface decks are commonly lightweight concrete or tile. Noncombustible deck board types typically include metal and fiber cement. Solid wood and wood-plastic composites (which can melt), are combustible deck board types.



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Medium density softwood decking products, such as redwood or western redcedar, are particularly vulnerable to ember ignitions. Most wood-plastic composites, along with higher density tropical hardwood, and fire-retardant treated decking products are less vulnerable to embers. Raised decks should have a non-combustible area underneath them, such as gravel. They may also be enclosed to reduce the potential for ember entry.

Ignition vulnerability points for decks

Source: ucanr.edu

PROTECT YOUR HOME

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The Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council's mission is to promote wildfire safety in Santa Barbara County through education and action. This Wildfire Home Hardening Guide was generously funded through the Cal Fire Climate Investment Grant for the Regional Wildfire Mitigation Program.



REGIONAL
WILDFIRE
MITIGATION
PROGRAM





Assess the materials used to build your deck to determine if they are combustible

Ideally, if it is combustible, the deck should be replaced with non-combustible materials such as metal or fiber cement. Most wood-plastic composites, along with higher density tropical hardwood, and pressure impregnated fire retardant treated wood deck boards are less vulnerable to flames and embers. However, most commercially available deck boards are combustible. These include redwood, cedar and tropical hardwoods, such as ipe, and all plastic composite lumber decking products.

If you have a non fire-retardant treated softwood deck, at a minimum, the 5 feet closest to the home should be replaced with non-combustible decking materials that match the thickness of the rest of the deck. However, if you choose not to replace your deck, other actions can be done to reduce its flammability, described below.

Check structures if they intersect with exterior walls

Where deck, porch or balcony structures intersect with exterior walls, non-combustible flashing can be installed between the underside of the exterior siding and the top surface of the deck.



Flashing at deck contact with home



Remove all combustible items removed from underneath, on top of and next to all decks and porches

Clear the area underneath and around your deck to remove any combustible material, such as stored wood, cardboard, dead organic material, etc. Flame spread to the home will be more likely if fine vegetation fuels (i.e. pine needles, leaf litter and small twigs) have accumulated under or around the deck. Avoid placement of any type of combustible mulch such as wood chips near the deck, and carefully select and maintain landscaping that touches the deck or is within 5 feet of it. If you have a deck, porch or patio structure that sits above a graded surface, the area below should be devoid of vegetation and only non-combustible materials should be placed there (such as gravel).



Hardwood deck with noncombustible material adjoining



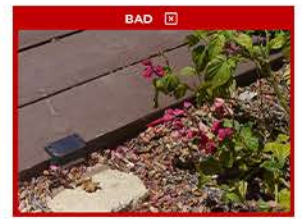
Combustible deck adjoining a home



Raised deck with combustibles stored underneath



Combustible soft wood deck

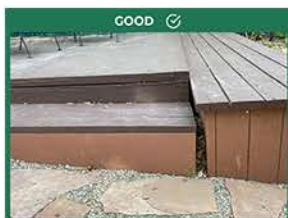


Combustible debris adjoining wood deck

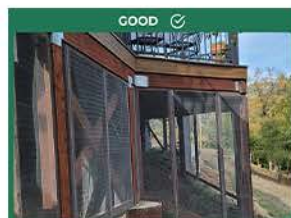


Maintain your deck to ensure no combustible debris or items are located underneath or on top of it, and add screens for raised decks to prevent ember entry

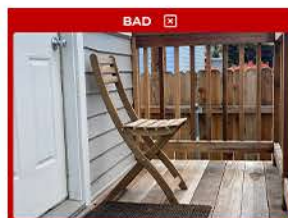
Enclose your deck if it is open underneath to avoid places where embers can enter and ignite it (if your deck is attached to the house, this is particularly important). Under-deck and porch areas can be screened with 1/2" or smaller opening wire mesh to prevent ember entry. Decks greater than four feet in height must be accessible from below, and all raised decks should allow for airflow and be maintained to ensure the area underneath has no combustible materials or debris.



Enclosed deck



Raised deck with ember screen



Combustible furniture on deck

