

PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE

# GUTTERS

**Properly maintaining gutters is an important component of home hardening.**

Gutters can be a conduit for fire to reach your roof, eaves siding, and attic if they are constructed out of combustible materials and/or contain debris. Wind-blown debris that often collects in gutters (including leaves and pine needles from nearby and overhanging trees) can be easily ignited by embers.

If ignited, combustible debris in the gutter will expose the edge of the roof covering, typically the fascia and/or roof sheathing. Fascia is the exterior framing that protects and gives shape to the roof and provides attachment points for other components like gutters and downspouts. (Fascia runs horizontally across the roofing section that overhangs the wall of the house). Gutters and downspouts should be constructed of noncombustible materials such as galvanized steel, copper, and aluminum and ideally covered with metal screening no greater than 1/16" in size to prevent leaf litter from entering.



## Ignition Vulnerability Points for Gutters

Source: ucanr.edu



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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.





**Confirm that you have metal gutters and replace any vinyl or plastic gutters with noncombustible materials such as galvanized steel, copper, or aluminum.**

Vinyl (or plastic) gutters will quickly melt, detach and fall to the ground. Debris and combustible gutter material will continue to burn, igniting any combustibles (mulch, vegetation, wood piles) and potentially any combustible siding and windows. If you have vinyl gutters and cannot replace them with metal, a noncombustible (or low flammability) Zone 0 zone near your home is critical (i.e., use noncombustible rock mulch and carefully selected and maintained vegetation). Even if you have metal gutters, make sure the components at the roof's edge are well maintained.

### Examples of different types of Gutters



**Metal gutter with screen**



**Clean metal gutter**

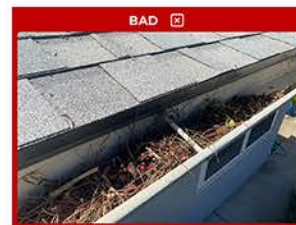


**Vinyl gutters can melt**



**Keep your gutters clean and free from flammable debris**

Embers will ignite accumulated debris in any gutter. Regardless of the gutter material, maintain your gutters to ensure they are free of combustible debris. Dry leaves and other debris that collect in your rain gutters can be dangerous and ignite very easily from wind-blown embers during wildfires. Cleaning your rain gutters regularly can prevent this from being a threat.



**Gutter with debris and no leaf guard**

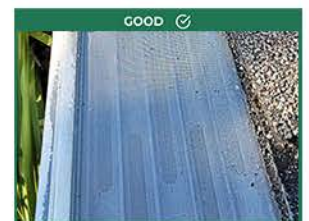


**Metal gutter with minimal debris**



**Upgrade your gutters with noncombustible covers with small enough openings to prevent debris from accumulating on your roof and in your gutters.**

Noncombustible gutter guards or covers can be installed over or in your gutters. When properly installed (and maintained), these can reduce the amount of vegetation litter and debris that accumulate in your gutter, and, therefore, reduce the need to clean it. Types of leaf guards include metal-mesh screens and metal hoods that fit into the gutter. Some types of leaf guards do not prevent all types of debris from accumulating in the gutter (e.g. mesh-type leaf guards allow pine needles to accumulate). Check regularly and remove debris if necessary, especially for any debris that accumulates on the roof because it was blocked from entering the gutter.



**Metal gutter with screen**



**Install a drip edge on your gutters.**

Some metal gutters have an integral flashing piece that serves the function of a stand-alone drip edge. If a drip edge is not present, install one to help protect the roof edge (sheathing and fascia) from flame exposure and to minimize the entry of embers into eaves.

