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# CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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### **Homeowners asked to Prepare Earlier Due to Increased Fire Activity** Drought conditions lead to early need of Defensible Space around homes

**Sacramento** – In just the first three weeks of January, CAL FIRE has already responded to a significant increase in wildfires this winter due to the extremely dry conditions. As a result, CAL FIRE officials are reminding residents to ensure they are maintaining 100 feet of Defensible Space; a reminder that comes several months earlier than normal.

“We are experiencing conditions right now that we would usually see in August,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director. “In Southern California we never really transitioned out of fire season and in Northern California we are already in the process of hiring additional seasonal firefighters to augment our permanent firefighters who have been staffing extra fire equipment this winter. We have increased our personnel and now we need the public to make sure they, too, are prepared for early fire season conditions.”

With record low rainfall, the grass and brush across California is tinder dry and ready to burn. Already this year CAL FIRE has responded to nearly 300 wildfires that have charred over 700 acres. In a normal year the department only responds to about 50 fires that all together would char a little over 100 acres.

Many of these fires have been sparked by powered equipment like lawn mowers and weed trimmers. While maintaining Defensible Space is critical right now, residents are asked not to use powered equipment outdoors during the heat of the day when it’s dry and windy, and especially on Red Flag Warning Days. Clearance work should be done in the early morning when temperatures are down and humidity is up, to avoid sparking a wildfire. One less spark means one less wildfire.

Here are some tips to creating Defensible Space:

- Maintain 100 feet of Defensible Space around all structures.
- Clear all needles and leaves from roofs, eaves and rain gutters.
- Trim branches six feet from the ground.
- Landscape with fire resistant / drought tolerant plants, that require little water
- Remove branches away from roofs and 10 feet from the chimney.
- Use trimming, mowing and powered equipment before 10 a.m., and not on hot, windy days.
- Keep wood piles and flammable materials at least 30 feet from the home.

The increased fire threat has also led officials to suspend outdoor residential landscape debris burning in many areas. Homeowners should always check with their local CAL FIRE station or fire department before burning outdoors. There are several alternative ways to dispose of trimmed branches and yard clippings including chipping, or taking it to a green waste facility. Residents can check with their local fire safe council for alternative landscape debris disposal programs.

For more information on preparing for wildfires and defensible space visit: [www.ReadyForWildfire.org](http://www.ReadyForWildfire.org). Watch this short video on Defensible Space: [Click Here](#) and on this year's dry conditions: [Click Here](#).

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