

California Defensible Space Checklist

The three-zone home survival guide for fire season — from Rent A Goat®

California law (PRC 4291) requires 100 feet of defensible space around homes in fire-hazard zones. Work through the zones in order — embers cause most home losses, so the first five feet matter most. Based on CAL FIRE defensible-space guidance; confirm details with your local fire authority.

ZONE 0 · 0–5 ft

The ember-resistant zone: nothing combustible touching the house

- Replace bark mulch and plants within 5 ft of walls with gravel, pavers, or bare soil.
- Move firewood, lumber, and anything combustible at least 30 ft from structures.
- Clear leaves, needles, and debris from the roof, gutters, and under decks.
- Remove branches overhanging the roof; keep all limbs 10 ft from the chimney.
- Relocate combustible fences/gates that attach directly to the house, or replace the last 5 ft with metal.
- No garbage bins, doormats, brooms, or planters against the wall during red-flag weather.

ZONE 1 · 5–30 ft

Lean, clean, and green

- Remove all dead plants, dry grass, and dead branches — everything brown goes.
- Keep grass mowed to 4 inches or less and irrigated where practical.
- Create separation between shrubs and trees; no continuous beds of vegetation leading to the house.
- Prune tree limbs up 6 ft from the ground (or 1/3 of tree height for smaller trees).
- Keep wood piles, propane tanks, and RVs out of this zone or clear 10 ft around them.
- Clear vegetation around and under decks, stairs, and outbuildings.

ZONE 2 · 30–100 ft

The reduced-fuel zone — where grazing shines

- Cut annual grasses down to a maximum of 4 inches across the zone.
- Thin brush and chaparral so clumps are separated by at least 2x their height on slopes.
- Remove ladder fuels: clear space between the ground vegetation and lowest tree branches.
- Break up continuous brush fields — islands of vegetation, not carpets.
- Clear along driveways and access roads so fire crews can reach you.
- Steep, brushy, or poison-oak terrain in this zone? This is where goat grazing replaces hand crews at a fraction of the cost — and with no spark risk.

Fire-season timing

- **January–March:** Plan and get estimates. Grazing calendars fill 1–3 months out.
- **March–May:** Ideal grazing window — vegetation is grown but not yet cured. Book your herd.

- **May–June:** Complete all Zone 0 and Zone 1 work before the first heat wave.
- **June–October:** Maintain. No mowing on hot/windy days after 10am — one spark is all it takes.

Steep? Brushy? Poison oak? That's our specialty. Free estimates for goat grazing anywhere in California — ~5-acre minimum, neighbors can combine parcels.

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