

On the Alert!

Date: April 12, 2024
Attention: ASCIP Members
Affected: Risk Management, Administrators, Teachers & Staff
Applicability: K-12, Community Colleges & Charter Schools

- ❖ **Ember Intrusion:** Cover all vents with 1/8" mesh, install weather seals along door edges (including roll-up doors), and make sure all windows close securely. This will prevent embers from slipping through cracks and igniting the building from the inside out. Consider installing wire mesh along perimeter fencing.

WILDFIRE AND DISTRICT RISK

Wildfires are increasing in both frequency and intensity in California with devastating consequences.

All schools and community colleges should consider their wildfire risks, but especially those with sites located within the [high fire hazard severity zone](#) identified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The following is an outline for wildfire risk management to prepare for wildfires and their consequences.

Mitigating Risk – What to Do *Before* a Wildfire

Prepare your property for wildfire with these five tips¹:

- ❖ **Defensible Space:** Strategically thinning and clearing vegetation around buildings will remove "ladder fuels." This helps prevent fire from approaching the structures. There are multiple defensible space zones; learn more about the zones at: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace>.
- ❖ **Flammable Materials:** Take a walk around your building exterior. Do you see items that would easily ignite, such as wood items (pallets or barrels), dead leaves, or packing materials? Cleaning up or storing items further away lessens your threat of small fires igniting near the structure.
- ❖ **Roofs and Gutters:** Keep your building roofs and gutters clean and free of debris. Tile roofs require cement bird-stops to seal the open tile ends, and if possible, one should replace flammable roofing materials like wood shingles. The roof can be a structure's most vulnerable or most protective feature.
- ❖ **Fire-scaping:** Work with your landscaper to fill planter beds next to structures with succulents and decorative stone, rather than dense shrubs, vines, and flammable bark. This reduces fire risk against siding and vulnerable glass windows.



Hardware Cloth Screen for Fencing

Keep in mind, most wildfire mitigation expenditures qualify for reimbursement under the Property & Liability Safety Credit Program. Reach out to your Risk Consultant today for more information.

What to Do *During* a Wildfire

Once the district has been notified of a wildfire in the area the following steps are recommended:

- ❖ Notify ASCIP
- ❖ Visit <https://www.airnow.gov/> to obtain real-time, local air quality conditions. If air quality becomes unsafe or if local regulatory monitoring indicates high levels of particulate matter in the air, keep students indoors.
- ❖ To prevent smoke from entering the buildings
 - Keep all windows and doors closed.
 - When evacuating the buildings, turn off the air conditioning/air circulation systems.

¹ Safety tips provided by Consumer Fire Products, Inc.



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What to Do Immediately *After* a Wildfire

When returning to district sites to evaluate the damage the following steps are recommended:

- ❖ Notify ASCIP
- ❖ Wait until the authorities have permitted entry before entering the facilities.
- ❖ Wait to turn on any gas fixtures, water faucets, or any electrically powered items, including lights, until either the fire department or other authorities deem it safe.
- ❖ When entering the property avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, and live embers. The ground may contain heat pockets that can burn you or spark, creating another fire.
- ❖ Wear a NIOSH certified-respirator or dust mask as applicable. Appropriate training is a requirement for all individuals who wear a NIOSH certified respirator.
- ❖ Wet the debris to minimize dust particles in the air.
- ❖ Conduct an inventory and document property damage with photographs.
- ❖ Implement post-fire heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) maintenance program to ventilate rooms/ buildings in accordance with the manufacturer recommendations.

ASCIP's Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Services

ASCIP recognizes wildfires pose quickly evolving risks and designed services to assist members in addressing them. Through ongoing monitoring of conditions, ASCIP will provide the following at no cost:

- ❖ Arrange for sealing building air intake as well as other common entry points to prevent ash and soot damage to building interiors.
- ❖ When wildfires threaten properties, ASCIP will deploy its response team to protect your structures and patrol nearby sites for ember cast.
- ❖ Time is of the essence for both services, which strongly rely on coordination with key district staff. Make sure your district's emergency mobile phone contacts are up to date with ASCIP.

Links and Resources:

- ❖ **High Fire Hazard Severity Zone:**
⇒ <https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/community-wildfire-preparedness-and-mitigation/fire-hazard-severity-zones>
- ❖ **Defensible Space Zones:**
⇒ <https://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace>
- ❖ **AirNow - Air Quality Data:**
⇒ <https://www.airnow.gov/>

Please contact your ASCIP Risk Services Consultant or our Risk Services team at RM_Info@ascip.org for questions or to discuss further.