



The Bonita Highlander

February 2025

Fire Safety Guidance

As seen in LA recently, wildfires can spread quickly and with devastating force! To minimize the risk of losing your home, it is essential to prepare your home to withstand the threat of fire. Taking some key proactive steps homeowners can significantly increase their home's chances of survival. The following information was collected from the CAL FIRE and the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety websites: readyforwildfire.org / ibhs.org/guidance/wildfire

Create a Defensible Space

The first line of defense is having a defensible buffer zone around your home to slow the fire from reaching your home. Creating this buffer zone involves clearing away flammable materials and reducing vegetation around your home.

- **Zone 1 (0-5 feet from your home):** Keep this area clear of leaves, mulch, and any vegetation; use of materials like gravel, pavers, and stone for landscaping is ideal
- **Zone 2 (5-30 feet from your home):** Remove dead or dying trees, brush, and grasses; trim trees to ensure a 10-15 foot clearance between tree branches and the ground.
- **Zone 3 (30-100 feet from your home):** Thin out trees and vegetation, creating an additional buffer zone that reduces fuel for potential fires.

Fortify Your Home's Exterior

Your home's exterior is the second line of defense against wildfires. Strengthen it to resist embers, radiant heat, and direct flames.

- **Roofing:** Use Class A fire-resistant-rated roofing materials such as cement or clay tile. Clean leaves, pine needles, and other debris from your roof regularly.
- **Siding and Walls:** Opt for fire-resistant materials such as stucco, brick, or concrete for the exterior of your home.
- **Windows:** Install dual-paned, tempered glass windows to better resist heat and flying embers.

Install Spark Arresters and Defensible Fencing

- **Chimney Spark Arrestors:** Install a mesh screen or spark arrestor on your chimney.
- **Fencing:** Use non-combustible or fire-resistant fencing materials, such as metal or stone.
- **Firewood and Propane tanks** should be located at least 30 feet from any structure.

Maintain a Fire-Resistant Gutter System

- **Clean Gutters:** Regularly remove leaves, branches, and debris from your gutters. Consider installing metal mesh gutter guards to prevent debris buildup.
- **Remove** all debris and fallen leaves off your roofs periodically.

Landscape and Irrigation Considerations

Your landscaping can act as both a defense and a threat in the event of a wildfire.

- **Fire-Resistant Plants:** Choose low-growing, fire-resistant plants that are less likely to catch fire. Avoid highly flammable plants like palm trees (especially untrimmed), pine, and cypress. "Skirt" trees up to at least 6 feet off ground, i.e., trim all small branches/suckers and hanging branches.
- **Watering Systems:** Install a drip irrigation system that targets specific plants, especially trees and shrubs.
- **Hardscaping:** Incorporate hardscape features like patios, pathways, and gravel areas to break up the continuity of vegetation.

Ensure Fire Safety Features Are in Place

- **Smoke Alarms and Sprinklers:** Install smoke alarms and sprinkler systems that can help detect fires early or reduce damage in the event of an emergency.
- **Fire Extinguishers:** Have fire extinguishers placed in strategic locations, including the kitchen, garage, and near exits. And make sure you know how to properly use your fire extinguisher.
- **Fire Hose and Water Source:** If possible, ensure your property has a reliable water source, such as a pool, pond, or well, with a portable pump, hose long enough to reach around your house, and possibly portable generator and gas.

Stay Informed and Be Ready to Act

- **Monitor Fire Alerts:** Sign up for local fire alerts and notifications. Use mobile apps, NOAA weather radio, or local news to stay updated on current fire conditions.
- **Evacuate Early:** If authorities issue an evacuation order, leave immediately. Don't wait for the fire to approach your area.

Open Space Chairperson Position Description

It is with regret that the BoD announces our OSC, James Endicott, has submitted his resignation. The BHHA Board will be accepting applications and conducting interviews to fill this part-time, paid BHHA Staff member position.

The job requires the following qualifications/skills:

- Ability to work well with people and communicate clearly
- Computer experience with Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, Power Point, and Adobe Acrobat
- Ability to read and understand the BHHA Open Space documentation, BHHA Rules and Regulations, San Diego Fire Code and be able to discuss with homeowners/contractors for compliance
- Ability during daytime to work with homeowners, vendors, fire department personnel and San Diego County personnel for both scheduled meetings as well as last-minute emergency meetings
- Daytime availability to perform inspections of the entire Bonita Highlands Open Space area and trails monthly, plus follow up inspections for problem areas
- Ability to deal in a professional manner with controversy, conflicts, and differences of opinions with homeowners and contractors
- Ability to obtain and compile estimates for various Open Space Jobs, compare, make a recommendation to the Board, then follow-up with the chosen vendor to oversee the project and ensure compliance for what was bid to be done by the vendor
- Availability to attend BHHA Monthly Board Meetings; the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Bonita/Sunnyside Fire Station.
- Ability to generate and brief the OSC Monthly Report at the monthly Board meetings
- Self-motivated, Friendly, Polite, Professional, Team Player.

General Notes and Reminders

HOMEOWNER RESPONSIBILITIES

Homeowners are responsible to maintain the same fire-safety criteria as defined by the local county and city fire rules and regulations for the BHHA Open Space as highlighted on the first two pages. Please make sure that all foliage is trimmed, laced, skirted appropriately and any dead areas are completely removed -- this is especially important with palm trees that may have dead fronds. Also address any plant debris that is on your roof. The ACC-C will be using the BHHA Yellow Door Hangers to remind homeowners of any issues observed, and if they are not addressed the BHHA will take formal action.

ANNUAL MAILING

The BHHA Annual Budget and Reserve Study has been approved and printed for those who have not signed up for electronic transmission. Mailings will go the homeowner's mailing address on record with the BHHA in PayHOA. Please note the Annual Assessment increased 3% to \$550.00. You will receive a courtesy reminder for this amount around the first of March regarding the 1 APR 2025 due date for your Annual Assessment. Payments will be considered late on 16 APR 2025. Payments of Assessments should be made via PayHOA.

In the Annual Budget packet you receive either electronically or by mail, you will also receive a BHHA Board Resolution. This single page resolution allows homeowners to vote for or against an authorization for the BHHA to apply all excess annual budget funds, if any, to the next year's budget. Please mark your vote, "For" or "Against" and return to the BHHA via mail, or simply email to Bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com. Your vote is due by 15 FEB 2025. *Thank You!*

Have an EMERGENCY PLAN and KIT

While developing a layered defense of your home essential, it's equally important to have an emergency plan in place for your family's safety.

- **Evacuation Plan:** Know multiple evacuation routes and have a plan for where to go in the event of an emergency/wildfire. Ensure that all family members are familiar with the plan, and don't forget to include your pets in your plans.
- **Emergency Kit:** Prepare an emergency kit with essentials such as water, non-perishable food, medications, flashlights, extra batteries, cell phone/computer chargers, and important documents. Keep it in an easily accessible location.
- **Pets:** Don't forget your pets and their needs in case of an evacuation, i.e., portable crates, blankets, food, water, toys, vet paperwork, and medications.
- **Communication:** Establish a communication plan to stay in touch with loved ones locally and outside the area during an emergency. Consider using an app or a group messaging platform.

The Bonita Highlander is the monthly newsletter of the Bonita Highlands Homeowners' Association (BHHA), a California non-profit corporation. The Newsletter is distributed (postage paid) or emailed to each residence within the Bonita Highlands. Information for publication should be sent to the recording Secretary & Editor, Mary Ellen Phillips at bhighlanderhoa@gmail.com by the 15th of the month, for publication the following month. The Association reserves the right to edit any copy submitted for publication.

BHHA

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The BHHA documents, forms, meeting minutes and notices can be found on its website:

bonitahighlands.org



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The next monthly BHHA meeting will be held on ***Tuesday February 11, 2025, at 6:00 PM***, in person at the Bonita Sunnyside Fire Station. All homeowners are welcome to attend.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introduction of Board members, Pledge of Allegiance, Announcement of the Next Meeting, Adoption of Minutes from the last monthly meeting.
2. Homeowner appearances for appeals to notices, fines, or requests for structural alterations.
3. Homeowner Open Communications.
4. Committee and Staff Reports: ACC-A (SCRs), ACC-C (violations), Financial Officer, Open Space Chairperson, and BHHA Communications.
5. Old Business: Split Rail Fence Update, BHHA Signage update.
6. New Business: Annual Mailing, OSC Backfill, BoD Election 2025, Rules & Regs Updates, Easement Request/OS Area at Wild Oats Lane & Country Trails.
7. Community Items of Interest.
8. Board Member Comments.
9. Adjournment.
10. Board Executive Session (if required).



The BHHA Board of Directors (BOD) welcomes and encourages e-mail and letters from homeowners. Any letter sent to the Board may be published in this newsletter. Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author or other contributor, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the BOD or any Staff Member.