

The Defensible Space Program for the Greater Ross Valley Area and Marin County Fire Department (West Marin and Unincorporated Areas of San Rafael)



Decades of research and years of increasingly devastating wildfires have taught us much about the best ways to protect our homes and our neighborhoods from this ever present threat. Firefighters understand that 60-90% of homes lost to wildfires ignite from tiny embers, not the flames at the front of a fire. These embers ignite combustible materials on or around the homes, or start “spot fires” in nearby vegetation which then spreads to the home itself.

It’s critical that residents and homeowners understand the specific issues that make their home vulnerable to embers, and know the steps required to reduce their risk. To assist in this process, uniformed Defensible Space Inspectors from the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA - marinwildfire.org) are actively working in Marin communities to help residents understand the risk on their own properties and to outline steps homeowners can take to make their home more resistant to inevitable wildfires.

Inspectors evaluate an entire property in 10-15 minutes on average, only inspecting properties with the permission of the owner or tenant. Residents are encouraged to accompany inspectors during the evaluation and ask questions. If nobody is home, inspectors evaluate publicly visible areas of the property, usually from the street, driveway, or front entry, taking care to respect privacy and curtilage.

MWPA’s Inspectors evaluate properties using custom software developed specifically to help residents improve defensible space. The software uses GIS and images to identify and record home hardening and vegetation hazards, including issues that might run afoul of fire code=s and local ordinances. Each property then receives a comprehensive online report, complete with photos and maps depicting problem areas, with specific recommendations and best practices to mitigate hazards. At the end of an evaluation, the inspectors leave a unique six-digit code that residents use to access their report online at <https://dspace.marinwildfire.org>. Reports are available for viewing approximately 36 hours after the home is evaluated.

This Defensible Space and Home Hardening Evaluation Program is the result of a partnership between Marin County Fire Department, Central Marin Fire Department, Ross Valley Fire Department, and Kentfield Fire Protection District and is funded by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA).

Defensible Space Evaluators are available to answer questions about the program at dspace@marinwildfire.org or (415) 275-1185

