

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Backyard Burning Ends in Santa Cruz County

Residential backyard burning has ended in Santa Cruz County. All pile burning in San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties requires a valid and current permit issued under specific conditions. With the transition into the warmer and drier months, increasing fire danger conditions make outdoor burning more hazardous. From December 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026, CAL FIRE CZU responded to five suspected escaped backyard burns and issued 2 citations. Please see **photos on Page 2**. An escaped backyard burn can quickly turn devastating, spreading beyond control in dry conditions and putting lives, homes, and entire communities at serious risk.

What this means for residents:

- Backyard burning of yard debris is **currently prohibited**.
- Agricultural, range, or other permitted burns may continue **only with proper authorization** and when conditions are deemed safe by fire officials.
- All burning must comply with local air quality regulations and daily burn status requirements.

Residents are encouraged to seek alternative methods for vegetation disposal, such as chipping, composting, or green waste collection services.

Burn Safety Reminders (When Burning is Allowed)

For authorized burning outside of peak fire season or under special permits, residents must follow strict safety protocols:

- Maintain **clearance of at least 10 feet** around the burn area, free of flammable materials
- Keep a **water source and hand tools** (shovel, hose) readily available
- Never leave a fire **unattended**
- Burn only **dry, natural vegetation**—no trash, plastics, or hazardous materials
- Avoid burning on **windy days** or when conditions could cause fire spread
- Fully **extinguish** the fire until ashes are cool to the touch

Failure to follow regulations may result in fines, liability for suppression costs, and potential criminal charges. Wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility. Taking simple precautions can significantly reduce the risk of wildfire in our communities.



Suspected Escaped Backyard Burns



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