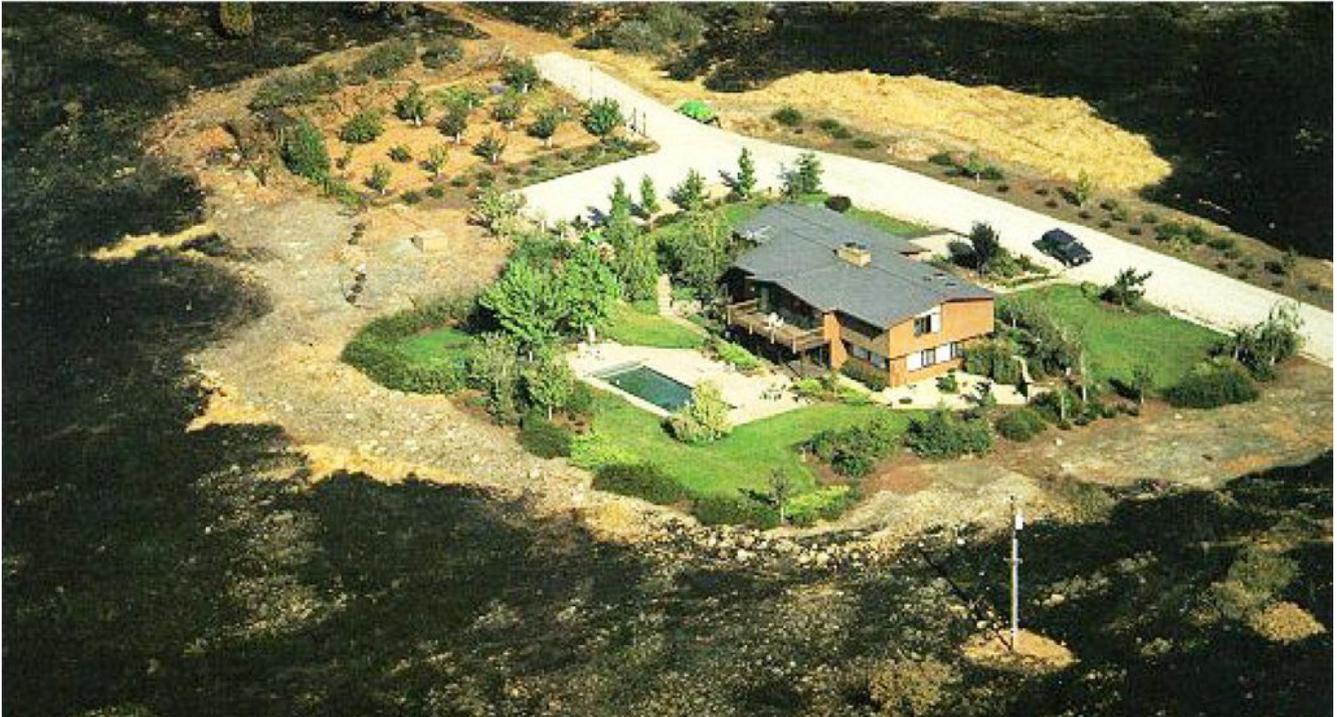


Be Wildfire Ready

## Defensible Space Saves Lives



Did you know that actively maintaining defensible space around your home will dramatically increase your home's chance of surviving a wildfire? Defensible space is the buffer you create between a building on your property and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland area that surround it. This space is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire and protect your home from catching fire. Defensible space is also an important protection for our firefighters and other emergency responders entrusted with defending our homes and neighborhoods.

### Protecting Your Home

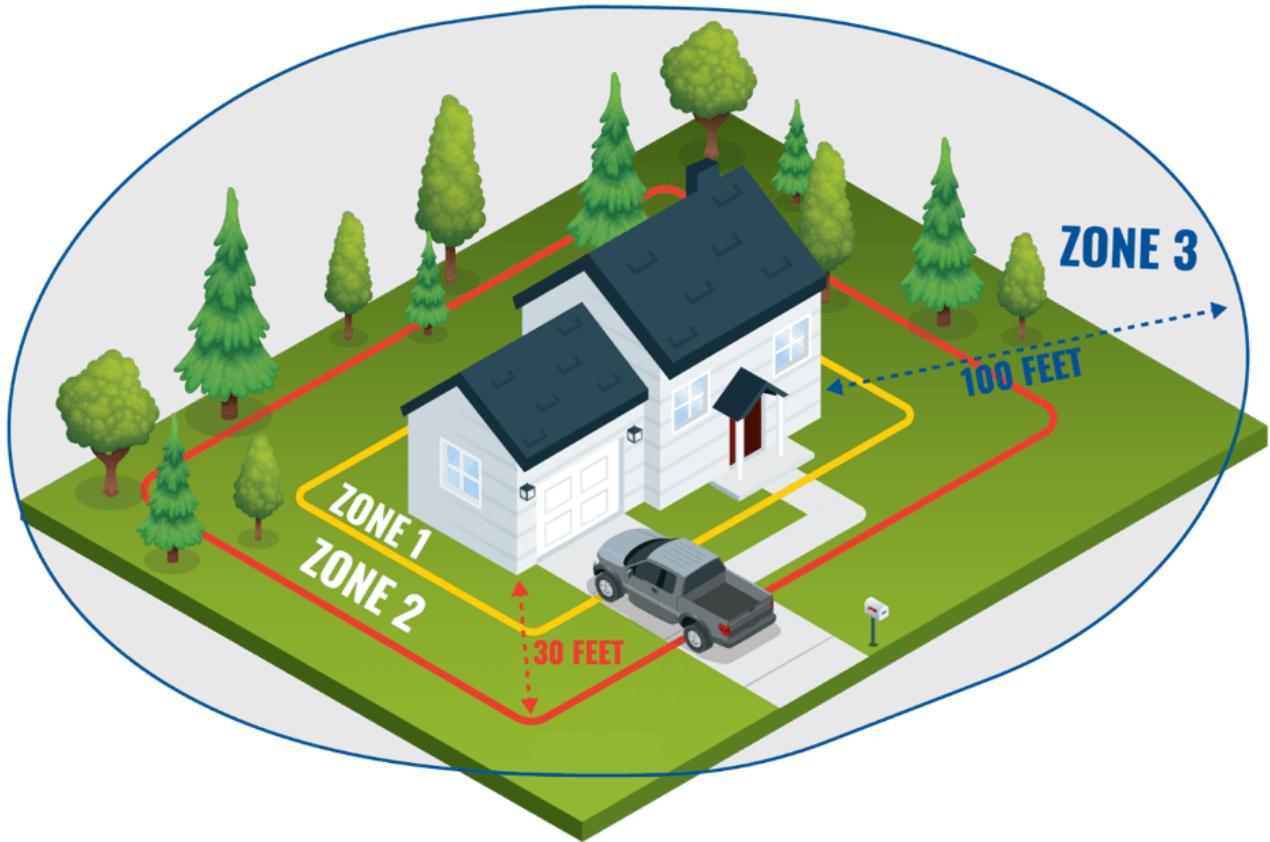
It's State law, that if you have property in a Very-high Fire Hazard Severity Zone or Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Area, you must have 100-feet of defensible space around any building or structure. If you are unsure whether or not you live in a mandatory defensible space zone, [click this link](#) to view a map of State and Town designated areas in Los Gatos.

In addition to State law, the Town of Los Gatos recently enacted several Municipal Codes amendments which enhance the safety of WUI residents. Specifically for new construction, there is a mandated 5-foot nonflammable zone and the Town enacted provisions that align with State law to recognize the importance of neighbors maintaining defensible space across property lines in certain instances. The new ordinances can be viewed through the links below:

[Ordinance 2301 - Amend Chapter 9 \(Fire Prevention & Protection\)](#)

## Defensible Space Zones

Following are guidelines from Santa Clara County Fire Department on how to create and maintain effective defensible space zones:



### **Zone 1, extends 0 to 5 feet out: The Noncombustible Zone**

- Remove all plants and vegetation, especially those touching your home.
- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
- Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.
- Reduce embers that could pass through vents in the eaves by installing 1/8 inch metal mesh screening.
- Clean debris from exterior attic vents and install 1/8 inch metal mesh screening to block embers.
- Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows.
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors – mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles – anything that can burn. Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.
- Mandated for new construction

### **Zone 2, extends 30 feet out: The Clean and Green Zone**

- Remove all dead plants, grass and weeds (vegetation).
- Remove dead or dry leaves and pine needles from your yard, roof and rain gutters.
- Trim trees regularly to keep branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.
- Remove branches that hang over your roof and keep dead branches 10 feet away from your chimney.

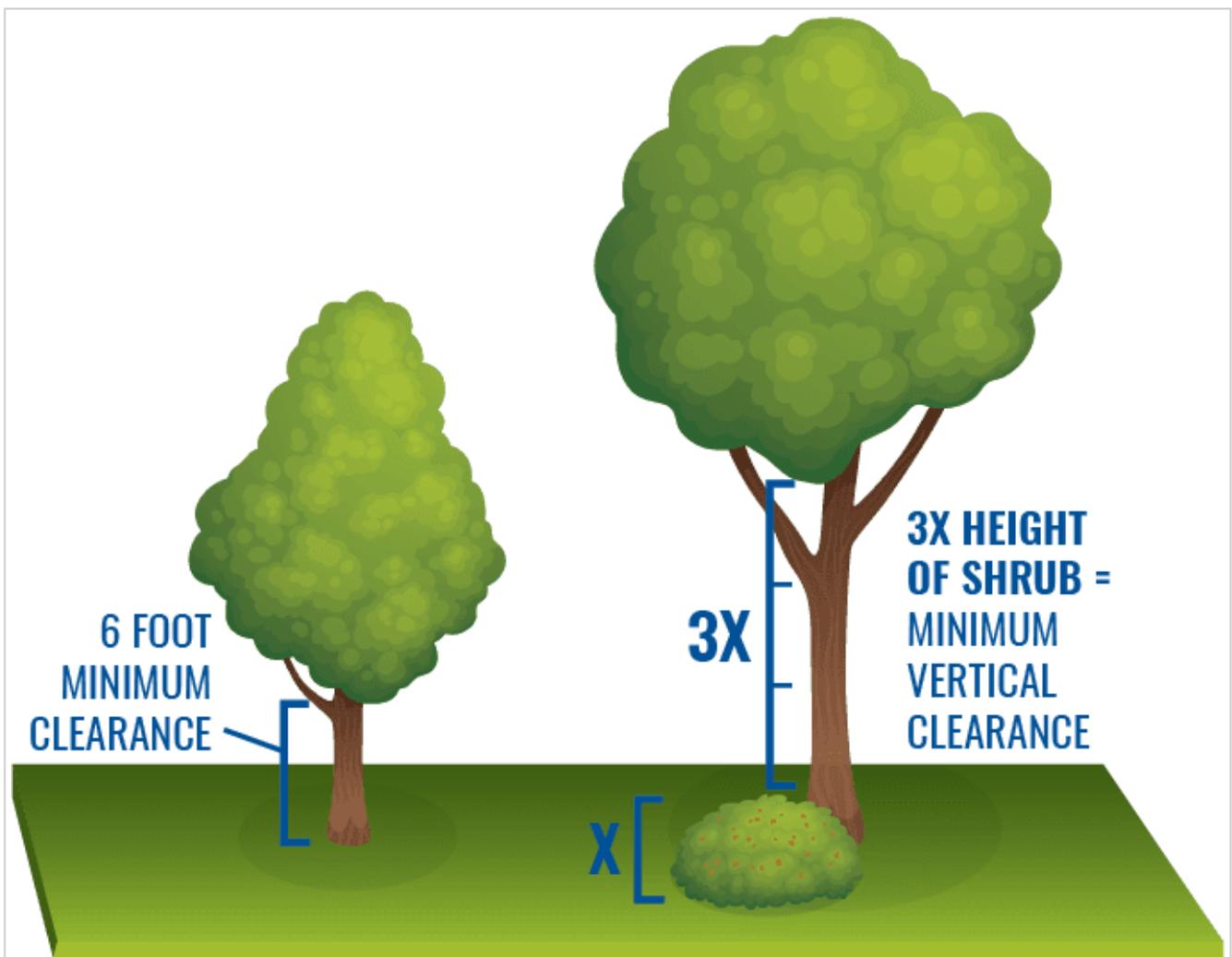
- Create a separation between trees, shrubs and items that could catch fire, such as patio furniture, wood piles, swing sets, etc.

### **Zone 3, extends 100 feet out: The Reduced Fuel Zone**

- Create horizontal spacing between shrubs and trees. (See diagram below)
- Create vertical spacing between grass, shrubs and trees. (See diagram below)
- Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.
- Remove dead plant and tree material.
- Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.
- Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.
- Trees 30 to 60 feet from the home should have at least 12 feet between canopy tops.
- Trees 60 to 100 feet from the home should have at least 6 feet between the canopy tops.

### **Plant and Tree Spacing**

For vertical spacing remove all tree branches at least 6 feet from the ground. If there is a shrub near the tree, the branch clearance needs to be 3 times the height of the shrub. *Example: A 5-foot shrub is growing near a tree.  $3 \times 5 = 15$  feet of clearance needed between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branch.*



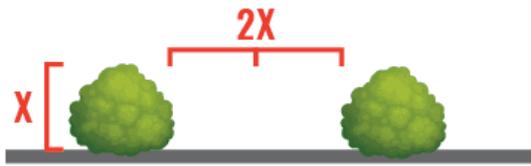
Horizontal

spacing between shrubs and trees depends on the slope of the land and the height of the shrubs or trees. Check the chart below to determine spacing distance.

*Need your property inspected?*

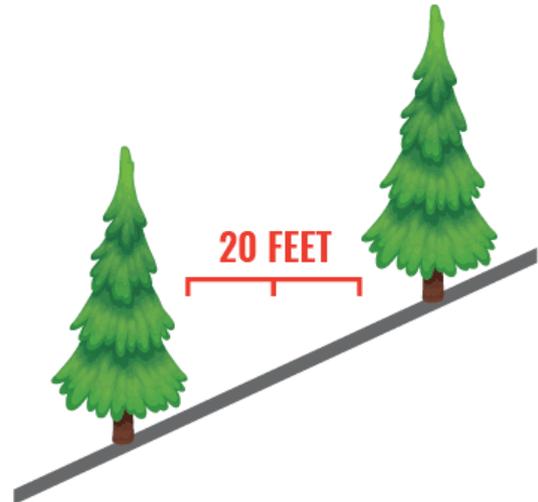
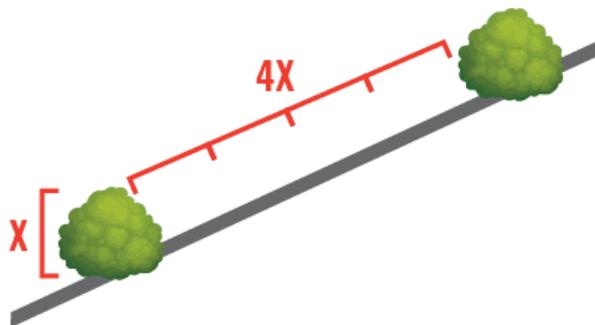
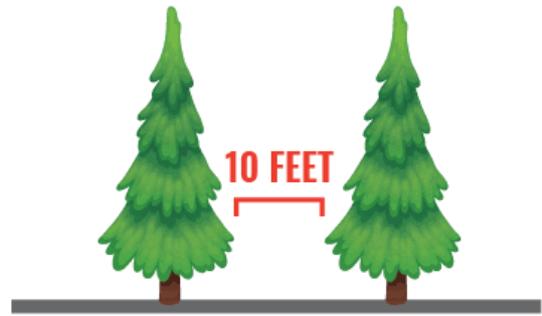
The Santa Clara County Fire Department provides free inspections. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

## SHRUBS

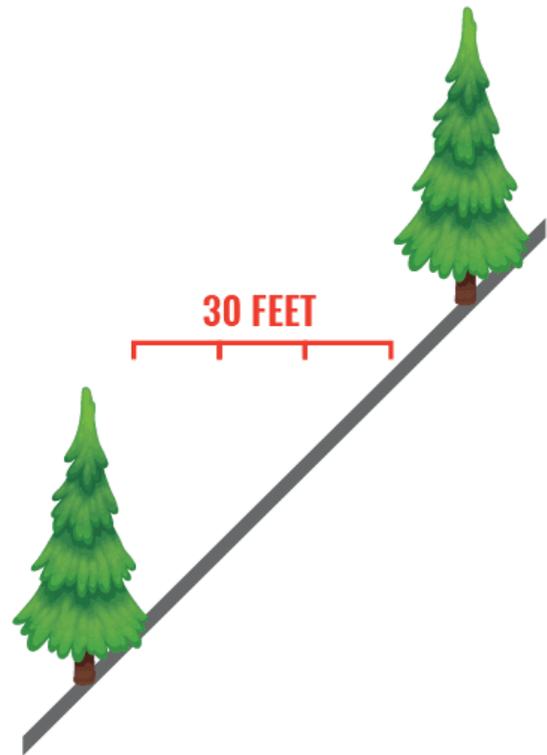
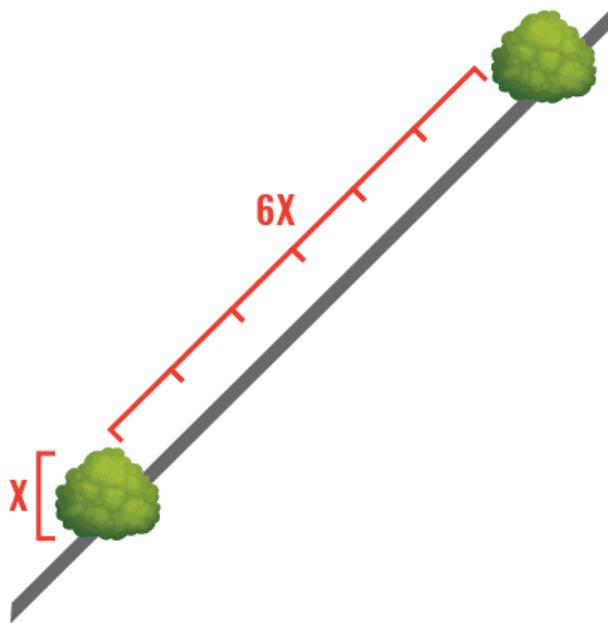


FLAT TO MILD SLOPE (LESS THAN 20%)

## TREES



MILD TO MODERATE SLOPE (20%-40%)



MODERATE TO STEEP SLOPE (MORE THAN 40%)

Preparedness Inspections are designed to assist property owners determine what can be done to their properties to minimize fire hazards and maximize fire resistance. If you live in a hillside community and would

like a free inspection review of your property, contact the Fire Prevention Division at (408) 378-4010.

## Defensible Space Along Property Lines

Neighbors, neighborhoods, and communities are working together to help create unified defensible space.

Wildfire safety is a shared responsibility since fire doesn't respect property or political boundaries. Adequate defensible space is essential to ensuring that individual homes and neighborhoods are safeguarded from the devastation of wildfires. This includes working with your neighbors to protect both, your structures and the neighbor's building that may be close to parcel lines. Neighbors are encouraged to work together to help provide defensible space for their respective properties. The most effective solution is a cooperative approach.

In limited circumstances, neighbors are unable to reach a mutual agreement. The Fire Chief, or his/her designee, can assist in determining the risk one property's vegetation poses to another property's structure. If the risk exists, the property owner of the vegetation shall be responsible for fuel management. The Town adopted provisions in its Municipal Code consistent with California Government Code Section 51182(a)(2) which allows jurisdictions to require defensible space beyond property lines in certain circumstances. For an assessment of vegetation around your structures, call the Fire Prevention Division at (408) 378-4010.

*Example: A structure is within 70-feet of its property line. The adjacent property poses a significant vegetation threat negating the ability to achieve 100-feet of defensible space around the structure. In the event the neighbors couldn't reach a mutual understanding, the Fire Department would assess if the adjacent property owner would need to assist its neighbor by completing fuel management on another 30 feet on their property.*

## Nonflammable Vegetation



Not all plants combust equally. There are many beautiful trees and plants to grow in your garden that will reduce your property's risk of being affected by a wildfire. Check out the list below, compiled by [University of California Master Gardeners Santa Clara County](#):

**Trees:** California live oaks, native redwoods, California bay laurel, maples, citrus, cherry, apple, strawberry tree, dogwood, ash, loquat, 'Little Gem' magnolia, toyon, white alder, weeping bottlebrush, redbud.

**Large shrubs:** Aloe, ceanothus, cotoneaster, escallonia, currant, pineapple guava, flowering quince, Island bush poppy, Pacific wax myrtle, photinia, pittosporum, mock orange, plumbago, podocarpus, laurel, viburnum.

**Flowering plants:** Azalea, camellia, hibiscus, lavender, monkey flower, California fuchsia, coral bells, society garlic, salvia, rhododendron.

**Ground covers:** Woolley yarrow, Ajuga reptans, purple rockrose, creeping coprosma, creeping thyme, ice plant, mock strawberry, wild strawberry, evergreen candytuft, lantana, Lamium, African daisy, wooly thyme, star jasmine, sedum.

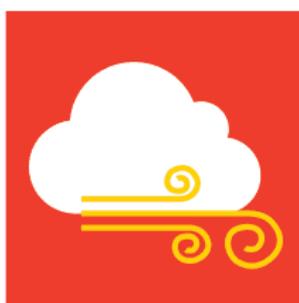
**Vines:** Trumpet vine, potato vine, Cape honeysuckle.

## Understanding Fire Weather

Red Flag Warnings are often preceded by a Fire Weather Watch, which is a National Weather Service (NWS) notice indicating that weather conditions in the next 12-72 hours may result in extreme fire behavior and trigger a Red Flag Warning. As of 2019, a Red Flag Warning may be accompanied by a Public Safety Power Outage, where PG&E shuts off power to power lines in areas at high risk of wildfire. NWS issues a Red Flag Warning when weather conditions in the next 24 hours may result in extreme fire behavior. These conditions may include: Low relative humidity, strong winds, dry fuels, and the possibility of dry lightning strikes.



**LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY**



**STRONG WINDS**



**DRY FUELS**



**POSSIBILITY OF DRY LIGHTNING STRIKES**

### Tips for Red Flag Warnings

1. Do not use lawnmowers or spark-producing equipment in or near dry vegetation. Follow local fire restrictions on powered equipment use.
2. Report unattended outdoor fires immediately to 911.
3. Avoid all outdoor burning.
4. Extinguish outdoor fires properly, never leave barbecues or cooking fires unattended. Always drown them with plenty of water.
5. Soak ashes and charcoal in water and dispose of them in a metal can. These materials can ignite days after a fire or BBQ is extinguished.
6. Be READY for wildfire by maintaining at least 100 feet of defensible space around your home.
7. Ensure access roads to your home are cleared and properly labeled.
8. Do not throw cigarettes or matches out of a vehicle. They can ignite dry vegetation on the side of the road and start a wildfire.
9. Do not pull your vehicle over in dry grass.
10. Ensure trailer chains do not drag on the ground.
11. Report any sign of smoke or fire immediately by dialing 9-1-1.

## Stay Informed

Be aware of when a Red Flag Warning is issued by [registering for AlertSCC](#). AlertSCC is a free and easy way to get emergency alerts sent directly to your cell phone or mobile device, landline, or email. Alerts can include:

- Red Flag Warning
- Fire
- Earthquake
- Severe weather
- Crime incident that affects your neighborhood
- Instructions during a disaster
- Post-disaster information about shelters, transportation, or supplies