



News Release: Wildfire-Resistant Homes Cost Roughly Same as a Typical Home

Analysis: Expense Should Not Be a Barrier to Constructing Safer Homes

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BOZEMAN, MONT – As wildfire disasters increase across the country, a [new study released today](#) found negligible cost differences between building a typical home and a home constructed using wildfire-resistant materials and design features.

“We know from post-fire assessments, accompanied by laboratory experiments, that two factors drive home vulnerability in wildfires: how the home is built in terms of materials used and installation details and the landscaping on the property,” said Dr. Steve Quarles, Chief Scientist for Wildfire and Durability at the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety. “Our study found little difference in the cost of a new home constructed to wildfire-resistant building codes, as compared to a typical home.”

Today, one-third of all U.S. homes are located the wildland-urban interface, and more than 35,000 structures were lost to wildfire in the last decade.

“Wildfires are becoming more costly, dangerous and destructive. If communities allow development in fire-prone lands they should consider adopting building codes that require new home construction be wildfire-resistant,” said report coauthor Kelly Pohl, a researcher at Headwaters Economics. “We know these tools are effective strategies for making communities safer, and they are available today.”

The study examines the cost of new construction and retrofitting four of the components most vulnerable to wildfire: the roof, exterior walls, deck, and landscaping. It also compares three existing statewide or national building codes that have been developed for construction in wildfire-prone lands.

While the perceived cost of implementing such regulations has been a commonly cited barrier to consideration by some communities, little research has previously examined how much it would cost the homeowner or builder to comply with such regulations.

“As large, devastating mega-wildfires have exploded in frequency over the past decade, one of the most frequently asked questions we’ve heard from homeowners and builders is how much it costs to build a wildfire-resistant home,” noted David Shew, retired Staff Chief for CAL FIRE. “This is the first time we’ve had a truly scientific answer to that question.”

This study was completed in partnership between [Headwaters Economics](#) and [The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety](#) (IBHS).

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About Headwaters Economics

Headwaters Economics is an independent, nonprofit research group that assists the public and elected officials in making informed choices about land management and community development decisions, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/>.
