

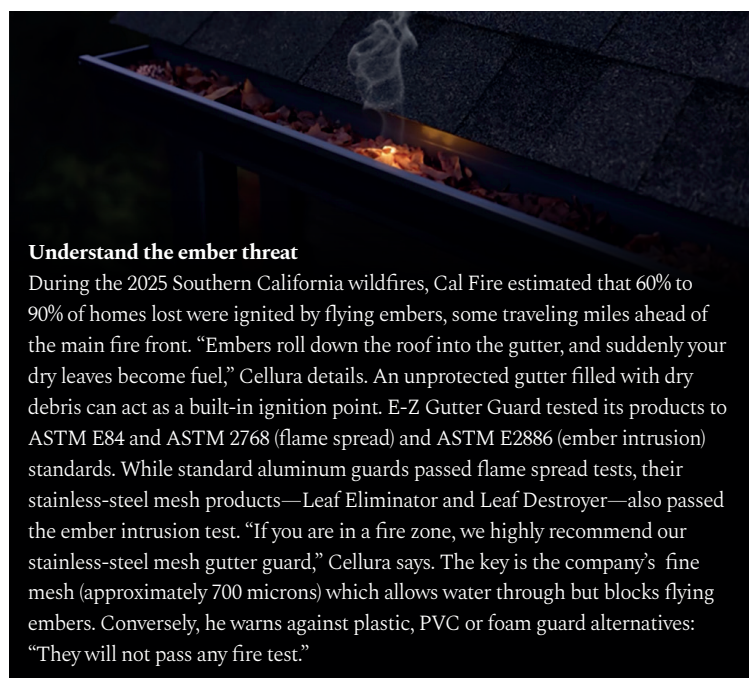
TOP TIPS FIREWISE GUTTERS

Neglected gutters are a wildfire blind spot. A gutter guard expert shares three fire-hardening tips

When discussing property fire hardening, most conversations center on defensible space, non-combustible landscaping and ember-resistant materials. Yet one key area is frequently overlooked: gutters. Clogged with dry leaves and pine needles, an unmaintained and unprotected gutter can become a perfect ignition point. Mike Cellura, Western regional sales manager at E-Z Gutter Guard, a Missouri-based, family-run manufacturer with over 40 years of experience in gutter protection, argues that landscapers and homeowners must treat gutters as an important part of any fire-hardening strategy. Here are his top tips.

Gutter maintenance

“We will never promise that you’ll never have to touch your gutters again,” Cellura says frankly. Even with high-quality gutter guards, fine debris like oak pollen, dust and pine needles can accumulate over time. He recommends a minimum annual inspection, ideally timed before a rainy season or during spring landscape cleanups. “When your crews are out doing mulching and preparing for summer, that’s a good time to sweep off gutter guards and check for buildup,” he advises. Cellura also suggests contractors offer a low-cost maintenance agreement to inspect and clear gutters once or twice a year.



Understand the ember threat

During the 2025 Southern California wildfires, Cal Fire estimated that 60% to 90% of homes lost were ignited by flying embers, some traveling miles ahead of the main fire front. “Embers roll down the roof into the gutter, and suddenly your dry leaves become fuel,” Cellura details. An unprotected gutter filled with dry debris can act as a built-in ignition point. E-Z Gutter Guard tested its products to ASTM E84 and ASTM 2768 (flame spread) and ASTM E2886 (ember intrusion) standards. While standard aluminum guards passed flame spread tests, their stainless-steel mesh products—Leaf Eliminator and Leaf Destroyer—also passed the ember intrusion test. “If you are in a fire zone, we highly recommend our stainless-steel mesh gutter guard,” Cellura says. The key is the company’s fine mesh (approximately 700 microns) which allows water through but blocks flying embers. Conversely, he warns against plastic, PVC or foam guard alternatives: “They will not pass any fire test.”



Add gutter protection to service offerings

Landscapers designing in wildland-urban interface (WUI) zones have a clear opportunity, according to Cellura. “If you’re planning trees and a beautiful landscape around a home, it’s a natural extension to recommend fortifying the property,” he says. As cities like those in Los Angeles County begin specifying gutters and gutter protection in new construction plans, landscapers can position themselves as full-service fire-resilience partners. “It can also be a business opportunity,” Cellura adds, whether by subcontracting gutter guard installation or directly advising clients. “Don’t wait for a fire to think about solutions,” Cellura concludes.



ABOUT

Mike Cellura, Western regional sales manager at E-Z Gutter Guard, is a former union carpenter and CertainTeed veteran of 42 years. Based in Los Angeles, he has spent his career in the building materials industry.

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