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Defensible Space is Critical in Protecting Our Homes and Forests

The Salmon River Complex fire on the Klamath National Forest demonstrated that defensible space can and does make a difference in protecting homes from wildfire. Defensible space – a well-maintained landscape of fire resistant plantings, properly pruned trees and shrubs and a well-watered lawn – has been proven time and time again to be effective in saving homes when wildfire threatens. That’s why it’s important for area residents to take action now – before another wildfire threatens. “Land owners should be sure to create and maintain a defensible space between homes and wildland areas, making structures much easier to defend when a wildfire threatens,” said Klamath National Forest Fire Chief, Ed Guzman.

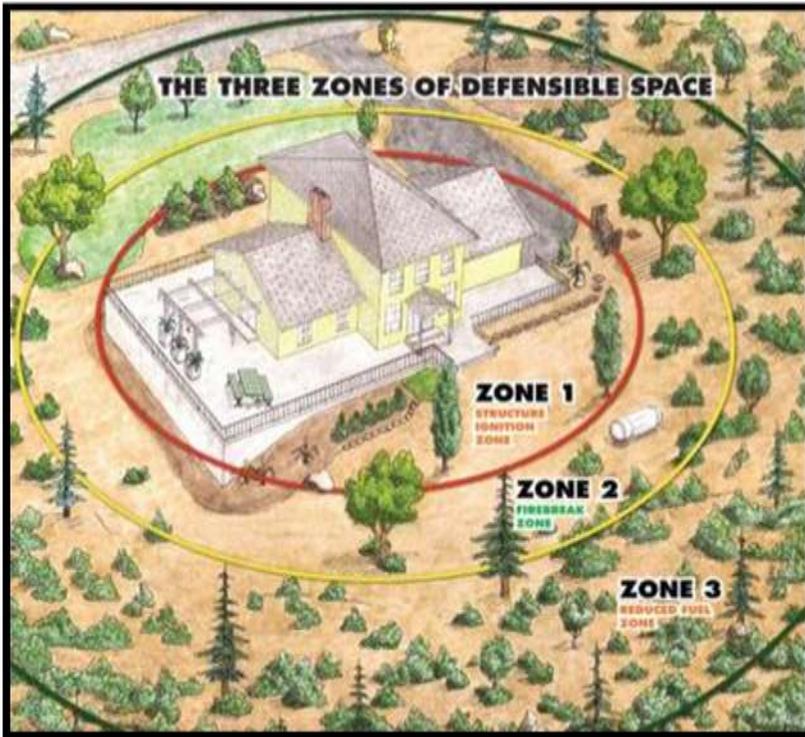
The biggest tool in someone’s wildfire arsenal is their own backyard. Trees should be limbed up 6-8 feet from the ground, underbrush and tree limbs should be cleared from around homes, and combustible materials and surface fuels, like firewood, should be moved away from propane tanks. “Defensible space is more than just maintaining the lawn and wooded areas around the house,” said Klamath National Forest Supervisor, Patty Grantham. “It can be as simple as moving the wood pile from next to the house to the other side of the yard. Cleaning the gutters or preventing debris from building up under porches can make a huge difference in a home’s survivability.”



The area to the right of the Sawyers Bar Church has been cleared of combustible vegetation, like underbrush and tree limbs. This is excellent defensible space.

California Public Resource Code 4291 requires homeowners to, “maintain around and adjacent to the building or structure a firebreak made by removing and clearing away, for a distance of not less than 30 feet on each side of the building or structure and maintain around and adjacent to the building or structure additional fire protection or firebreak made by removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth that is located within 100 feet from the building or structure or to the property line or at a greater distance if required by state law, or local ordinance, rule, or regulation.” Homeowners are truly the first line of defense in protecting their homes. Learn more at:

<http://www.wildfireprograms.usda.gov/search.html?search=advanced&string=PRC4291&state=&displayId=60>



With wildfire season expected to continue for months, residents are being asked to take proactive action. You can take the following steps to reduce your home's vulnerability to wildfire.

ZONE 1: 30 feet or more adjacent to the home, beyond attachments such as wooden decks and fences

- Keep this area well-irrigated and free of dry vegetation and debris. Plants should be carefully spaced, low growing and free of resins, oils and waxes that burn easily.
- Mow the lawn regularly. Prune all trees so the lowest limbs are 6-10 feet from the ground. Remove dried leaves, pine needles and other dead vegetation.
- Allow space between tops of trees to reduce the risk of crown fire.
- Within five feet of the home, use

nonflammable landscaping materials, such as rock, pavers, annuals and high-moisture-content perennials.

- If you live in a moderate- to high-hazard area, consider fire-resistant patio furniture, swing sets and accessories.
- Keep firewood stacks and propane tanks at least 30 feet from the home.
- Water plants and trees regularly to ensure they are healthy. Mulch should also be watered.
- Keep trash and other debris like old cars, household trash, building materials, etc. away from structures.

ZONE 2: 30-100 feet from the home

- In moderate- and high hazard areas, plants should be low growing, well irrigated and less flammable.
- Leave approximately 30 feet between clusters of two to three trees, or approximately 20 feet between individual trees.
- Prune trees so branches and leaves are at least six to 10 feet above the ground.
- Give yourself added protection with "fuel breaks," such as driveways, gravel walkways, and lawns.

ZONE 3: 100-200 feet from the home

- Keep this area thinned out.
- Remove heavy accumulation of woody debris.
- Reduce the density of tall trees so high-intensity crown fire is less likely to reach your home.

Defensible space is the main component of Firewise, a national wildfire awareness and preparedness plan meant to help empower and encourage homeowners to take an active role in defending their homes from wildfire. For more tips on Firewise landscaping, visit www.firewise.org and for more information on defensible space, visit www.fire.ca.gov