



FOREST SERVICE

United States  
Department of Agriculture

Inyo National Forest  
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# NEWS

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BUREAU OF LAND  
MANAGEMENT

United States  
Department of Interior



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## Homeowners Need to Prepare for Wildfire



### Six Steps to Creating an Effective Defensible Space

#### Step One

**Determine the size of an effective defensible space:** The size of the defensible space is usually expressed as a distance extending outward from the house in all directions. The recommended distance is not the same for every home. It varies depending on the dominant vegetation surrounding the home and steepness of slope. If the Defensible Space Zone exceeds your property boundaries, seek permission from adjacent landowners before doing work on their property. It is important to note that the effectiveness of the Defensible Space Zone improves when entire neighborhoods implement defensible space practices.

#### Step Two

**Remove dead vegetation:** For the most part, dead vegetation should be removed from the Defensible Space Zone. Dead vegetation includes dead and dying standing trees or recently fallen trees; dead native and ornamental shrubs; dead branches; dried grass, weeds and flowers. Fallen trees embedded into the ground and located **more than 30 feet** from the house can be left in place, with exposed branches removed.

#### Step Three

**Create a separation between trees and shrubs:** Within the Defensible Space Zone, native trees and shrubs, such as Jeffrey pine, white fir, and manzanita, should not occur in a dense stand. Dense stands of trees and shrubs pose a significant wildfire threat. Thin dense tree and shrub stands to create more space between them.

#### Step Four

**Remove ladder fuels:** Vegetation that can carry a fire burning in low growing plants to taller plants is called “ladder fuel.” Lower tree branches should be removed to a height of at least 10 feet. Shrubs and trees growing under the drip line should also be removed. Irrigated, well-maintained lawn and flower beds, as well as low-growing native ground covers can be present under the tree’s drip line as long as they would not allow a fire to ignite the tree. Removal of tree branches should not exceed one third of the total tree height.

## Step Five

**Create a Lean, Clean and Green Area extending 5 feet to 30 feet from the house:** There are two goals for the Lean, Clean and Green Area. The first goal is to eliminate easily ignitable fuels, or “kindling,” near the house. This will help prevent embers from starting a fire in your yard. The second goal is to keep fire intensity low if it does ignite near the house. By proper management of the vegetation and other fuels near the house, a fire would not be able to generate enough heat to ignite the home. For most homeowners, the Lean, Clean and Green Area is also the residential landscape. This area often has irrigation, is planted with ornamental vegetation, and is regularly maintained.

## Step Six

**Create a Noncombustible Area at least 5 feet wide around the base of the house:** The area immediately adjacent to a house is of critical importance to house survival during a wildfire. It should consist of noncombustible landscape materials and ignition-resistant, low volume plants.



*Photo courtesy of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection*

For further information contact Debra Hein, Fire Mitigation and Education for the Bishop Field Office of the BLM at (760) 872-5057.

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