

Defending Your Home (Continued)

- Place a ladder against the roof of the house on the opposite side of the approaching wildfire. Place a garden hose near the ladder prepared as described previously.
- Place portable pumps near available water supplies (pools, hot tubs, creeks, etc).
- Close all windows and doors. Do not lock them.
- Close all inside doors.
- Turn on all outside lights and a light in each room to increase visibility of your home in heavy smoke.
- Fill tubs, sinks and any other containers with water.
- Shut off the gas at the outside meter of the propane tank.
- Turn off pilot lights.
- Open fireplace damper and close fireplace screens.
- Remove lace, nylon and other drapes and curtains made from light material. Close blinds, heavy drapes and fire-resistant window coverings.
- Move overstuffed furniture into the center of the house, away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Park your car in the garage, facing out. Close the windows but do not lock the doors. Leave keys in the ignition.
- Close the garage door but leave it unlocked.
- Disconnect the automatic garage door opener.

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Home Wildfire Safety Tips



Homeowner Wildfire Safety Practices

- Use noncombustible or fire-resistant building materials, especially on the roof. Class A or B roofing materials (fiberglass based shingles, slate, clay, tile or metal) are advised. Use a minimum Class III flame spread siding material like stone, brick or stucco. Any existing wood siding, cedar shakes or other combustible materials should be treated regularly with a fire retardant.
- Install chimney screen or spark arrestor with a maximum 1/2 inch wire mesh.
- Use a maximum 1/4 inch wire mesh to screen off decks, porches and foundation, roof and attic openings. This helps keep debris from accumulating underneath or firebrands from entering.
- Post house or lot number so that it is clearly visible.
- Provide adequate driveway and turnaround space for emergency vehicle access with 10 feet of clearance on each side of drive.
- Protect windows and sliding glass doors with nonflammable shutters and use fire-resistant drapes or blinds in the interior, especially on the side of the house that would most likely be exposed to a fire, e.g., the downhill side.
- Inspect and clean chimney, roof and gutters on a regular basis.
- Equip home with smoke detectors and at least one 10-pound ABC-class fire extinguisher.
- Bury power and telephone lines underground. If this is not possible, keep poles clear of branches.
- Develop an external water supply for firefighting. This can be a small pond, cistern, well, swimming pool, etc. If you have a well, provide a power source for the pump motor separate from the house. Have an outside water faucet located away from your home with sufficient hose to reach all parts of your residence.
- Store tools such as shovels, axes, rakes, hoes, buckets and a ladder tall enough to reach the roof for use in case of fire.
- Dispose of leaves and debris with your trash. In most areas open burning is prohibited. If burning is allowed, use an approved, properly screened incinerator.
- Plan and rehearse a home fire escape drill.
- Know where safety areas are within your subdivision. Meadows, rock outcrops and wide roads are good examples. Know all emergency escape routes.
- Report all fires immediately to your local fire department or the county sheriff's office.

Subdivision Activities

- Form a fire protection or forestry committee to organize and oversee needed projects and activities.
- Install fuelbreaks at strategic locations throughout your subdivision.
- Thin dense stands of trees and/or brush on common grounds and greenbelts.

- Post house name and number signs prominently. Maintain all road and street signs, which should be visible from both directions.
- Install a fire danger sign at the entrance to your subdivision (ratings must be kept current on a daily basis) and other fire prevention signs throughout the subdivision.
- Clear at least 3 feet around and above fire hydrants and check them periodically for adequate flow and pressure.
- Reduce fuel under utility lines and around poles.

Evacuation Tips

- If a wildfire threatens your area, listen to your radio for updated reports and evacuation information.
- Confine pets to one room and make plans to take care of them in the event of evacuation.
- Arrange for temporary housing with a friend or relative whose home is outside the threatened area. Leave a note in a prominent place in your home that says where and how you can be contacted.
- If your home is threatened by wildfire, you will be contacted and advised by law enforcement officers to evacuate. If you are not contacted, evacuate pets and any family members not needed to protect your home.
- Remove important documents, mementos, etc. from the possible fire area.
- When evacuating, wear protective clothing: sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
- Choose a route away from the fire if possible. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of the fire and smoke.
- Take a disaster supply kit containing
 - A supply of drinking water
 - One change of clothing and footwear for each family member
 - A blanket or sleeping bag for each person
 - A first aid kit that includes any prescription medications
 - Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flash light and extra batteries
 - An extra set of car keys and credit cards, cash or traveler's checks
 - Extra eyeglasses and other special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members

Fire crews and equipment often are overwhelmed by the task of fighting a rapidly advancing wildfire. There may simply not be enough personnel and equipment to defend every home. As a homeowner in a forested area, you can do a great deal to prepare and maintain your property on a consistent basis to enhance your homesite and family safety.

Create A Defensible Space Around Your Home

In the absence of a defensible space, fire fighters will often bypass a house, choosing to make their stand at a home where their safety is more assured and the chance to successfully protect the structure is greater.

A defensible space is an area where the vegetation is modified to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire. It creates an open area where fire fighters can make their stand and which also helps to protect the surrounding forest from a structure fire.

Developing a series of defensible management zones on your forested property can create an effective defensible space around your home. (Figure 1)

Zone 1 - the area of 15 feet immediately around the structure in which all flammable vegetation is removed.

1. Plant nothing within 3 to 5 feet of the structure. Decorative rock creates an attractive, easily maintained, nonflammable ground cover.
2. If the house has noncombustible siding, widely spaced "fire wise" plants are acceptable. These are plants and shrubs that grow close to the ground (wildflowers, ground cover), have open loose vegetation (currant and mountain mahogany), low sap or resin content (deciduous species) and high moisture content (succulents and some herbaceous species), are slow growing and need little maintenance. Do not plant beneath windows or next to foundation vents.
3. No firewood, other combustibles or fuels (propane) should be stored in Zone 1.
4. Extend the gravel coverage under the decks. Do not use area under decks for storage.
5. Ideally, remove all trees from Zone 1. If you keep a tree, consider it part of the structure and extend Zone 1 defensible space accordingly. Isolate the tree from any other surrounding trees by 10 to 12 feet crown spacing (Figure 3) and prune it to at least 10 feet above the ground. Remove all "ladder fuels" from beneath the tree. (Ladder fuels are small shrubs, trees, tree limbs, etc. that allow fire to climb to the tree "crown" (branches and foliage)). Trim branches extending over your roof and remove those within 15 feet of a chimney.
6. Keep Zone 1 grasses cut below 2 inches.

Zone 2 - the area of fuel reduction extending a minimum of 70 feet from the structure and designed to reduce the intensity of any fire approaching your home. See Figure 2 to adjust this zone distance if there is a slope above or below your home.

1. Thin trees and large shrubs, leaving at least 10 feet between crowns.

2. Crown separation is measured as the distance between the closest branches of two trees and/or shrubs (Figure 3). On steep slopes allow more space (20% to 40% grade= 20 extra feet, 41% and above = 30 extra feet). Remove all ladder fuels and prune trees to at least 10 feet above the ground.
3. Dispose of all thinning debris.
4. Stack firewood uphill or on the same elevation as the structure but at least 30 feet away. Keep all flammable vegetation at least 10 feet from the woodpile.
5. Set propane tanks 30 feet away from any structures, preferably on the same elevation as the house. Keep all flammable vegetation at least 10 feet away from the tank.
6. Keep Zone 2 grasses mowed below 8 inches.

Zone 3 - a more naturally forested area extending from Zone 2 to your property lines which should be managed in a more traditional manner.

1. Thin trees, leaving the biggest and healthiest, and prune as needed to help reduce ladder fuels. A good rule of thumb for tree stem spacing is trunk diameter + 7. Measure the trunk in inches at about 4 1/2 feet above the ground. Substitute feet for inches and add 7. For an 8-inch ponderosa pine using this formula, figure 8 feet plus 7 or a space of 15 feet between tree stems. (Figure 3)
2. Pruning is not necessary here but does help reduce ladder fuels, adding one more measure of safety.
3. Support limited harvesting of firewood, fence posts, and other forest commodities from your property.
4. Mowing is not necessary.



Defensible Management Zones

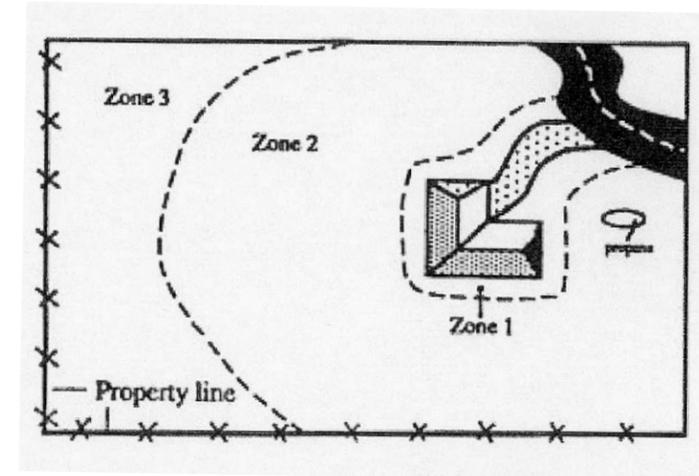


Figure 1: Forested property showing the three fire-defensible zones around a home or other structure.

Defensible Space on Slopes

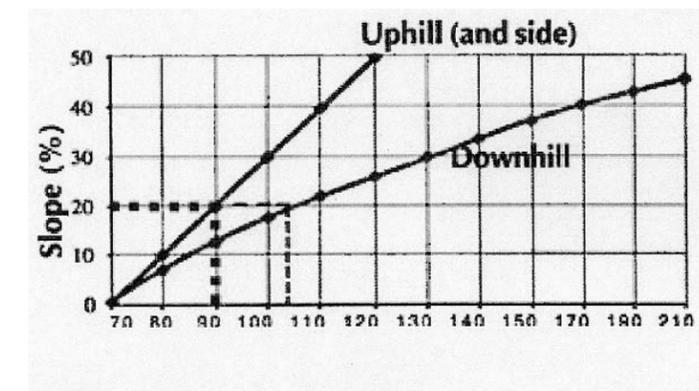


Figure 2: This chart indicates the minimum dimensions for defensible space from the home to the outer edge of Zone 2. For example, if your home is situated on a 20 percent slope (20 foot rise on a 100 foot run), the minimum defensible space dimensions would be 90 feet uphill and to the sides of the home and 104 feet downhill from the home.

Stem and Crown Spacing

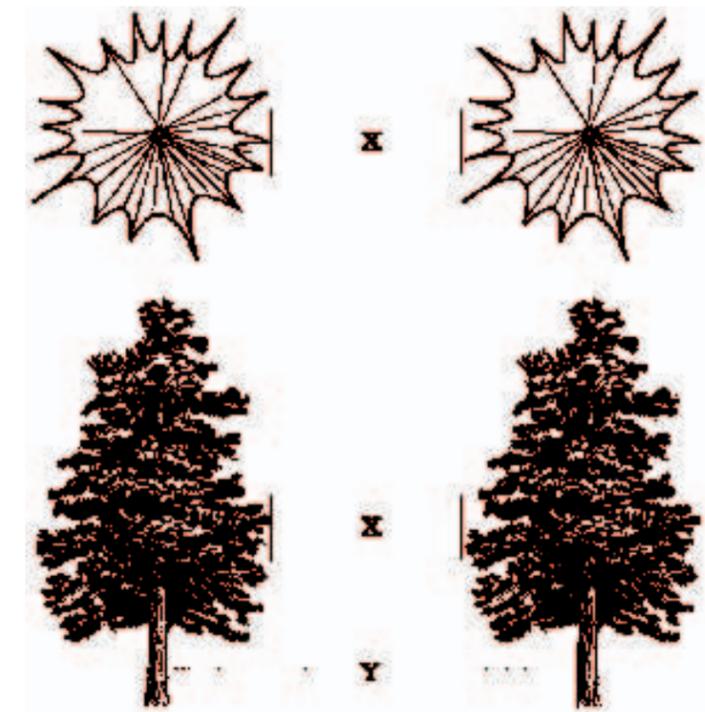


Figure 3: X=crown spacing; Y=stem spacing. Do not measure between stems for crown - measure between the edges of tree crowns.

Defending Your Home

Whether you choose to stay to defend your home when wildfire strikes or if you must evacuate, the Colorado State Forest Service recommends that you:

- 🔥 Not jeopardize your life. No material item is worth a life.
- 🔥 Wear fire-resistant clothing and protective gear.
- 🔥 Remove combustible materials from around structures.
- 🔥 Close or cover outside vents and shutters.
- 🔥 Position garden hoses so they reach the entire house. Have hoses charged, with an adjustable nozzle, but turned off.
- 🔥 Place large, full water containers around the house. Soak burlap sacks, small rugs or large rags in the containers.

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