



Defensible space

Your first defense against wildfire is to create and maintain a defensible space around your home. This does **not** mean your landscape must be barren. A defensible space is an area, either man-made or natural, where the vegetation is modified to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire. It also creates an area where fire suppression operations can occur and helps protect the forest from a structure fire.



A disaster waiting to happen.



This home is more easily defensible.

Defensible Space

Wildfire hazards can be effectively reduced by following these defensible space guidelines developed by the Colorado State Forest Service. (Also see Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet 6.302.)

- The dimensions of a defensible space are subjective and depend on site characteristics, but typically a defensible space, on flat ground, extends a minimum of 75 feet around a home. This distance should be extended if the structure is located on a slope.



- Thin out continuous tree and brush cover around structures. The initial 15 feet around a structure should consist of an area in which all flammable vegetation is removed.
- Beyond the initial 15 feet, trees should be thinned to 10-12 foot crown spacing. Occasionally, clumps of 2 or 3 trees are acceptable for a more natural appearance if additional space surrounds them.
- Mow dry grass and weeds to a height of 6 inches or less for a distance of 30 feet from all structures.



- Prune tree branches within the defensible space up to a height of 10 feet above the ground.
- Dispose of all slash and debris left from thinning by either chipping, hauling away or piling and burning (check with your local fire department for burning restrictions).

- Remove shrubs and small trees, or other potential “ladder” fuels from beneath large trees. Left in place, these fuels can carry a ground fire into the tree crowns.



- Trim branches which extend over roof eaves.
- Remove branches within 15 feet of chimneys.



- Maintain the defensible space annually by removing debris, shrubs and other vegetation which has accumulated during the year.



- Clean pine needles, leaves and other debris from roofs and gutters. This will eliminate an ignition source for firebrands, especially during hot, dry weather.



- Stack firewood and wood piles at least 30 feet from any structure. Clear away flammable vegetation within 10 feet of these wood piles. (Many homes have survived as a fire passed, only to burn later from a wood pile that ignited after the firefighters left.)



This home might not survive a wildfire.

- Place liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanks and fuel storage containers at least 30 feet from structures. Clear flammable vegetation from within 10 feet of all such tanks.



Remember, after you have established your **FireWise** environment, you must maintain it regularly. If you have any questions about creating or maintaining defensible space around your home contact your local fire department or Colorado State Forest Service district office.