



Defensible Space Requirements

Platte Canyon Fire Protection District

Wildfire Hazard Mitigation

Defensible space is an area around a structure where fuels and vegetation are treated, cleared, or reduced in order to slow the spread of wildfire towards the structure. The design of a defensible space is based upon local weather, topography and fuels. The inspecting specialist will assess these variables and apply the following standards in the design of each defensible space.

ZONE 1

This zone measures **15 feet** from the outside edge of a home's eaves and any attached structures (decks) to the crown (branches) of the nearest tree. **Remove** all flammable vegetation in this area.

Exception: In an open grown ponderosa pine environment, where large distances exist between trees, a VERY isolated tree can be left within Zone 1. This tree must be isolated from the next tree by a least 20 feet, the tree's crown cannot touch or overhang the structure. AND, the tree's branches must be pruned at least 15 feet high.

ZONE 2

Minimum Mitigation - 30 feet from structure

Optimum Mitigation - As stated in Colorado State Publication No. 6.302

The total distance for Zone 2 will vary with changes in topography. As slope increases, the minimum distances for Zone 2 will increase. Zone 2 can extend to, but not past, the property line.

Create 10 foot separations between tree/shrub crowns by selective thinning. Small groups of two or three trees may be left, if there is greater than 10 feet of separation from the group to the other trees.

Crown separation is measured from the furthest branch of one tree to the nearest branch on the next tree.

Each forested lot is unique in its vegetation type, size, and arrangement. Some types of forests that require modification to the normal defensible space standard include:

1. Aspen - It will not be required to thin aspen trees.
2. Lodgepole pine - In a dense stand of lodgepole pine ("dog-hair"), do not thin to 10 foot crown spacing in the first cutting. Initial thinning should provide several feet of crown separation and the landowner will need to continue to thin the forest gradually to reach the 10 feet standard.
3. Gambel Oak (Oak brush) - All gambel oak will be removed within 50 feet of structure. Beyond the 50 feet of clearing small patches of oak brush, no larger than 10 feet in diameter, can be created with at least 10 feet of vegetation cleared between patches.

Remove all ladder fuels from under and within ten feet of the remaining trees in Zone 2.

Ladder fuels connect surface vegetation to aerial vegetation. They include shrubs and young trees growing beneath mature trees, as well as branches hanging low to the ground. Prune all remaining trees so that the lowest hanging portion of the branch is 10 feet off the ground. Isolated shrubs may remain, if they are at least 10 feet away from the crown of the remaining trees. Stack firewood and woodpiles in an open area uphill or

on the same elevation as the structure. Firewood or other wood piles must be a minimum distance of 30 feet away from the structure. Dispose of slash (the branches and tops of cut vegetation) and down woody debris on the forest floor by using local slash/mulch sites, chipping material onsite, burying or burning. Woodpiles or detached structures within the defensible space zones are considered fuels and 10 feet of clearance to the nearest vegetation will be required.

These regulations were developed with the support of the Colorado State Forest Service. For additional information regarding the basis of these techniques please refer to "Natural Resources Series: Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones No. 6.302" published by Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.