



Three Rivers RC&D, Inc Wildland Fire Education Program



Idaho Department of Lands Minimum Fuel Reduction Standards for Hazardous Fuel Treatment Projects

Note: Please bear in mind that these are minimum standards and guidelines. Local Fire Managers may require more stringent standards to meet their area needs.

Although no home or property can be guaranteed not to burn, their ignitability can be greatly reduced by mitigating hazards that are present.

- Wildfire will find the weakest link in defense measures not taken on property.
- The primary determinants of a home's ability to survive wildfire are its' roofing material, and the quality of survivable space surrounding it.
- Even small steps taken to protect homes and property will make them more able to withstand fire.
- Home and property owners should be aware that developing survivable space not only enhances their safety and lowers probability of ignition; it also allows emergency workers more room to do their job.

100 foot zone (From structure out to 100')

Continuity, density, arrangement, and fuel types greatly affect the rate of fire spread, fire intensity, and the ability to control fire. The less fire allowed close to the home improves its ability to survive. The amount of fuel that is allowed to accumulate can be critical in the 100 foot zone around the structure. This does not mean total vegetation removal. Low intensity burning can occur within the 100 foot zone without igniting a home if Firewise measures are taken.

An adequate 4 foot fuel break adjacent to the structure must be established.

- Fuel breaks cannot contain fuels such as flammable vegetation, firewood, petroleum products, etc..., especially if the structure is sided with wood, logs or other flammable building materials.
- Greenbelts of lawn, concrete sidewalks, rock, gravel, or mineral soil are good examples of an adequate defensible space.
- If a house has non-combustible siding, widely spaced foundation plants or fire resistant species such as Rhododendrons are acceptable.

- Ideally all trees should be removed from the 4 foot zone. If a tree must remain, consider it part of the structure and extend the survivable space accordingly.

From the no fire area to 100 feet, the landscaping should be arranged such that only low intensity surface fires can occur. The following steps help reduce the possibility of a fire being carried into the tree canopy and then to the structure.

- All dead vegetation such as needles, leaf litter, dead grass, etc... must be removed.
- Coniferous trees, particularly those with dense canopies and fine needles, require more thinning and pruning than deciduous broadleaf trees. Coniferous trees are prevalent in Idaho, and have much higher resin content and are much more susceptible to crown or torch and carry fire through the canopy to structures.
- Ladder fuels that can carry fire into a tree canopy or structures must be removed.
- Larger western conifers such as Ponderosa pine, Western larch, and Douglas fir usually self prune themselves and require little pruning, however, if not, prune to at least 12 to 16 feet high and thin to at least an 8 foot spacing between crowns.
- Smaller conifers and brush that can ladder fire into the crowns of larger trees must be removed.
- Space shrubs 4 feet apart or greater.

Firewood and other combustibles

Firewood and other combustibles can be a critical home ignition factor and many homes have burned from woodpiles that ignited as a wildfire passed by. On many projects, the homeowner will decide to keep the firewood generated from the thinning of trees and other by-products of fuel reduction.

- Storage between 30 to 100 feet has a low to moderate ignitability potential, unless the wood pile is unusually large or the woodpile is between the structure and prevailing winds, producing significant fire brands.
- Storage less than 30 feet greatly increases the possibility of ignition from radiant heat.
- Storage or accumulation of firewood, gasoline, lawnmowers, needle and leaf litter, and other vegetation under decks, eaves, or adjacent to structures is a high hazard and should be discouraged.