



• STANDARD 8 • DEFENSIBLE SPACE

SCOPE:

To provide a 100 foot fuel reduction zone for defensible space around buildings located in/upon or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands or any land that is covered with flammable material and is within the State Responsibility Area. Reference: PRC 4291 (a) & (b), 14 CCR 1299.

DEFINITIONS:

Aerial Fuels: All live and dead vegetation in the forest canopy or above surface fuels, including tree branches, twigs and cones, snags, moss and high brush. Examples include trees and large bushes.

Building or Structure: Any structure used for support or shelter of any use or occupancy.

Defensible Space: An area either natural or manmade where material capable of causing a fire to spread has been treated, cleared, reduced, or changed to act as a barrier between an advancing wildland fire and resources and or lives at risk.

Firebreak: A clearing of all flammable vegetation and other combustible growth within 30 feet of each building or structure.

Fuel: Vegetative material, live or dead, which is combustible during normal summer weather. For the purposes of this guideline, it does not include fences, decks, woodpiles, trash, etc.

Reduced Fuel Zone: The area that extends out from 30-100 feet away from the building or structure (or the property line, whichever is nearer to the structure) where fuel is reduced.

Surface Fuels: Loose surface litter on the soil surface, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches that have not yet decayed enough to lose their identity; also grasses, low and medium shrubs, tree seedlings, heavier branches and downed logs.

GENERAL:

- This standard applies to any person who owns, leases, controls, operates or maintains a building or structure in/upon or adjoining any mountainous area, forest-covered lands, brush-covered lands, grass-covered lands or any land that is covered with flammable material and is within the State Responsibility Area.
- In all cases, fuel reduction does not mean cutting down all trees and shrubs, or creating a bare ring of earth across the property. It does mean arranging the trees, shrubs and other fuel sources in a way that makes it difficult for fire to transfer from one fuel source to another.

- Properties with greater fire hazards will require more clearing. Clearing requirements will be greater for those properties with steeper terrain, larger denser fuels, highly volatile fuels and areas that succumb to frequent fires.
- The owner's clearing responsibility is limited to 100 feet away from structures or to the property line, whichever is less, and limited to their property. Adjacent property owners are not required to clear beyond 100 feet from their structures, but they are encouraged to do so to create appropriate defensible space.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Maintain a firebreak by removing and clearing away all flammable vegetation and other combustible growth within 30 feet of each building or structure, with certain exceptions pursuant to PRC 4291(a).
- Maintain a fuel reduction zone 30-100 feet from structures clear of dead and dying woody surface fuels and aerial fuels. Loose surface fuels shall be permitted to a depth of 3 inches in height.
- Within the fuel reduction zone 30-100 feet provide a disruption of the fuel both vertically and horizontally by removing the continuity of the flammable and combustible vegetation with the goal of reducing fire intensity and spread.
- Horizontal minimum clearance between fuels and vertical minimum clearance between lower limbs and aerial fuels, and the nearest surface fuels in the fuel reduction zone should range between 4-40 feet in all directions. The distance will be dependant on slope, vegetation size, vegetation type (brush, grass, trees), and other fuel characteristics (fuel compaction, chemical content etc).
- Retention of a continuous stand of larger trees with no space between tree canopies will be allowed when: all surface fuels greater than 4 inches are removed and lower limbs of trees are pruned at least 6 feet up to 15 feet (or the lower 1/3 branches for smaller trees).
- Grass generally should not exceed 4 inches in height. However, grass and other ground plants may be maintained less than 18 inches in height above the ground when isolated from other fuels or where it is necessary to provide ground stabilization for erosion control.
- Downed logs or stumps, when embedded in the soil, may remain if isolated from other vegetation.
- The fire inspecting official with jurisdiction may approve alternative practices which provide for compliance with these regulations.