

# Annual Safety Measures and Home Maintenance in the WUI

During a wildland fire, homes that have clear defensible space are identified as sites for wildland firefighters to engage in structure protection, and homes that are not safely defensible will not usually receive firefighter resources. Reviewing safety protocols, creating defensible space, and hardening your home are not one-time actions, but part of *annual* home maintenance when living in the WUI. For more information see the 2021 CSFS publication *The Home Ignition Zone: A guide for preparing your home for wildfire and creating defensible space* available at <https://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/protect-your-home-property-from-wildfire/>.

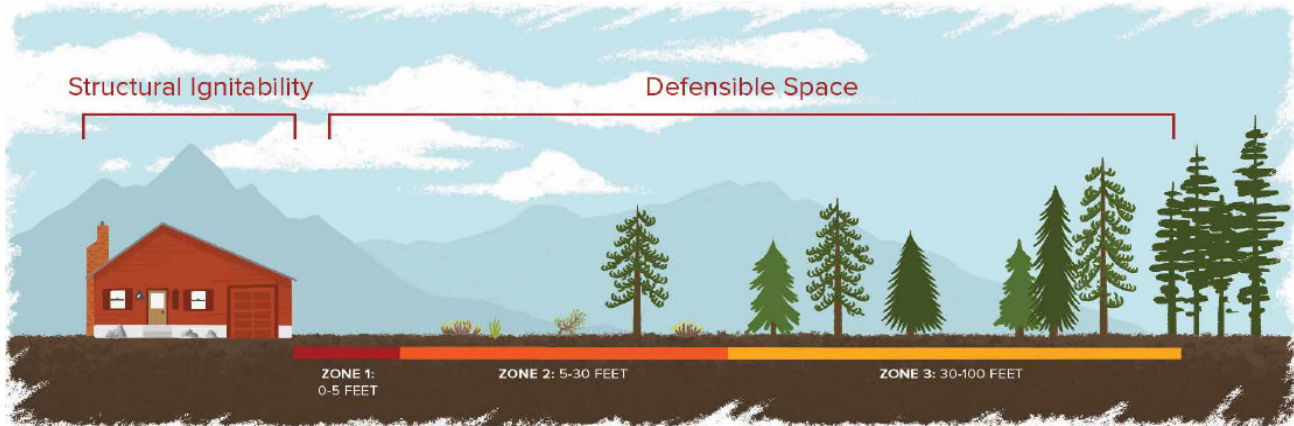


Illustration: Bonnie Palmatory, Colorado State University

## **Top Priorities** \*Address as needed, more than once a year.

Clear roof, deck and gutters of pine needles and other debris.\*

Mow grass and weeds to a height of 4 inches or less.\*

Rake and remove all pine needles and other flammable debris from a 5-foot radius around the foundation of your home and deck.\*

Treat or mow shrubs that re-sprout aggressively (such as Gambel oak) every 3-5 years.

Remove branches that hang over the roof and chimney.

Dispose of slash from thinning trees and shrubs by chipping, hauling to a disposal site or piling in open areas for burning later. Any accumulation of slash that's chipped or otherwise should be isolated 30 feet or more from the home.\*

Avoid creating continuous areas of wood chips on the ground when chipping logs and/or slash. Break up the layer of wood chips by adding nonflammable material or allow for wide gaps of at least 3 feet between chip accumulations.

## **Firewood and Propane Tanks**

Keep firewood and propane tanks stacked uphill from (or at the same elevation as) and at least 30 feet away from your home and other structures.

Do not stack firewood between remaining trees, underneath the deck, or on the deck.

Remove flammable vegetation within 10 feet of woodpiles, propane tanks, and gas meters.

## **Driveways**

Maintain at least 10 feet between tree crowns and keep trees a minimum of 30 feet back from each side of the driveway along the entire distance from the house to the main access road.

Remove any remaining ladder fuels beneath trees after thinning.

Remove any shrubs that are within 10 feet of the outer edge of tree crowns.

Space shrubs apart at least two-and-a-half times their mature height, as measured from the edge of the shrubs.

Post signs at the end of the driveway with your house number that are noncombustible, reflective and easily visible to emergency responders.

## Solutions for Managing Slash

Properly thin and prune trees and shrubs as you address the home ignition zone. The sticks and other debris left from cutting trees and shrubs is called slash. Slash is a fuel for wildfire, so ensure this debris is properly managed on your property. It is critical that any slash is located as far from your house as possible:

Spread slash and wood chips over a large area of ground to avoid heavy accumulations and large piles. Being close to the ground will help speed decomposition.

Burn slash piles, but before doing so, always contact your county sheriff's office or local fire department for current information or possible restrictions.

Lop and scatter slash by cutting it into small pieces (generally less than 24 inches long) and distributing it over a wide patch of ground, to a depth not exceeding 18 inches. Material over 4 inches in diameter should not be scattered.

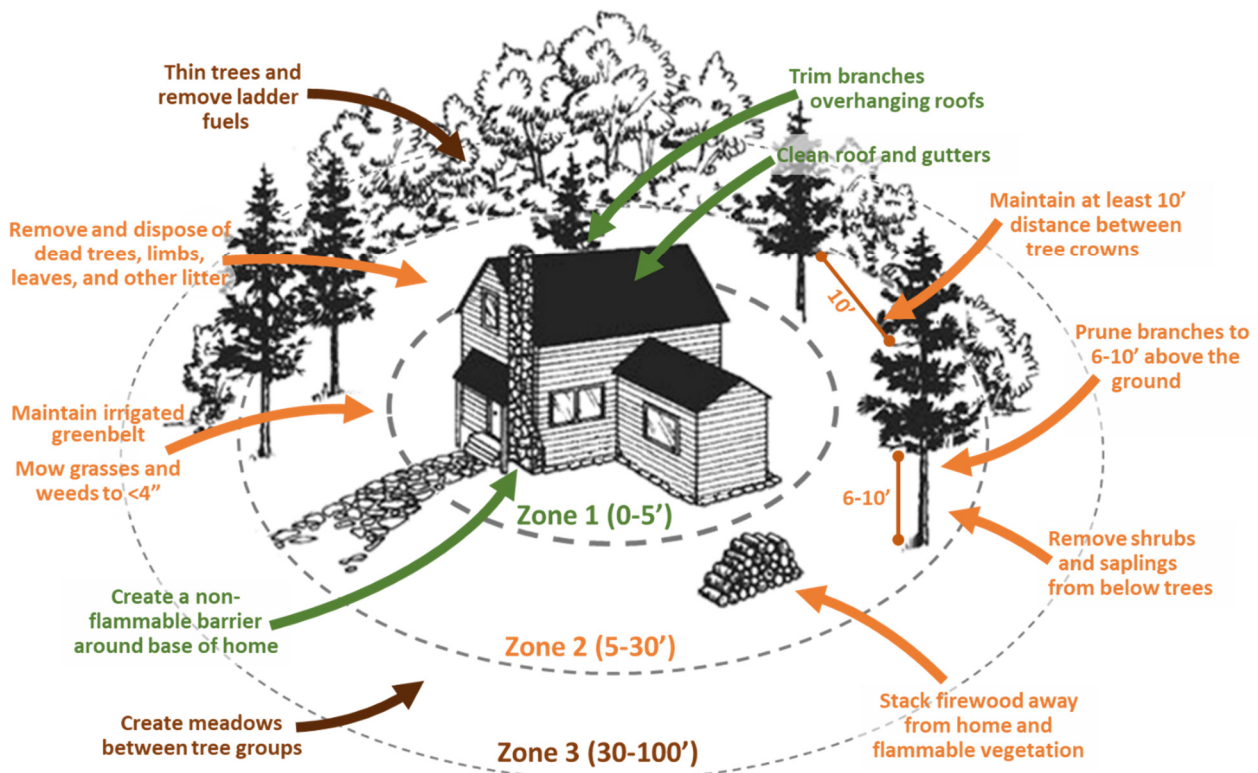
Dispose of leaves, needles, and branches during slash pickup dates organized by the Genesee Foundation or by Jefferson County. See <https://www.jeffco.us/2493/Slash-Collection> for more information on County slash-pickup dates.

## Don't Forget

Verify that your home telephone number, cell phone, and/or email are properly registered through CodeRED.

Review the contents of your "go-bag" and make sure it is packed and ready to go. Your go-bag should include supplies to last at least three days, including cash, water, clothing, food, first aid, and prescription medicines for your family and pets. Keep important documents and possessions in a known and easily accessible location so you can quickly grab them during an evacuation.

Ensure that an outdoor water supply is available for responding firefighters. Put a hose and nozzle in a visible location. The hose should be long enough to reach all parts of your home. **DO NOT** leave sprinklers on in the case of evacuation as this can cause issues with water pressure for firefighters defending your neighborhood.



Defensible space zones and mitigation measures recommended by the Colorado State Forest Service. Image from the CFSF with modification by M.S. Matonis.