

- 13. FIRE MITIGATION POLICY.** The county is requiring that all new subdivisions to develop and implement a fire mitigation plan for the subdivision. In view of the impending wildfire hazard potential to Sunset Ridge, we will require all new construction in our subdivision to comply with the county's requirement for new subdivisions. We consider this to be prudent and responsible. The added cost to comply during construction is minimal and the long term benefits are considerable.

The requirements are fairly simple to implement and are covered in some detail in a handout from the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension bulletin # 6.302 titled, Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones. <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/NATRES/06302.pdf>

Driveways should be twelve feet wide and have a vertical clearance of twelve to fourteen feet. There should be enough turn around space to accommodate a very large pickup truck type fire truck.

The requirements we will require conform to the "prescriptions" section of this document for zones 1 &

- The prescription for zone 3 does not apply to our subdivision because of the small lot sizes in our subdivision. According to our local Colorado State Forester, our subdivision is best suited to applying the recommendations of zones 1 & 2 only. Existing lots with homes already constructed are strongly encouraged to implement these same requirements. Following is an excerpt from the bulletin mentioned above.

#### Prescriptions

##### **Zone 1**

The size of Zone 1 is 25 feet, measured from the edges of the structure or the drip line of trees within zone1. Within this zone, several specific treatments are recommended. Plant nothing within 3 to 5 feet of the structure, particularly if the building is sided with wood, logs or other flammable materials. Decorative rock with a vegetation barrier underlayment for example, creates an attractive, easily maintained, nonflammable ground cover. If the house has noncombustible siding, widely spaced foundation plantings of low growing shrubs or other "fire wise" plants are acceptable. Do not plant directly beneath windows or next to foundation vents. Be sure there are no areas of continuous grass adjacent to plantings in this area. Frequently prune and maintain plants in this zone to ensure vigorous growth and a low growth habit. Remove dead branches, stems and leaves. Do not store firewood or other combustible materials in this area. Enclose or screen decks with metal screening. Extend the gravel coverage under the decks. Do not use areas under decks for storage. Ideally, remove all trees from Zone 1 to reduce fire hazards. If you do keep a tree, consider it part of the structure and extend the distance of the entire defensible space accordingly. Isolate the tree from any other surrounding trees. Prune all tree branches to at least 10 feet above the ground. Remove any branches that interfere with the roof or are within 10 feet of the chimney. Remove all "ladder fuels" from beneath the tree. Ladder fuels are vegetation with vertical continuity that allows fire to burn from ground level up into the branches and crowns of trees. Ladder fuels are potentially very hazardous but are easy to mitigate. No ladder fuels can be allowed under tree canopies. In all other areas, prune all branches of shrubs or trees up to a height of 10 feet above ground (or 1/2 the height, whichever is the least).

##### **Zone 2**

Zone 2 is an area of fuel reduction designed to reduce the intensity of any fire approaching your home. Follow these recommended management steps.

Thin trees and large shrubs so there is at least 10 feet between crowns. Crown separation is measured from the furthest branch of one tree to the nearest branch on the next tree (Figure 3) . On steep slopes, allow more space between tree crowns. (See Figure 4 for minimum recommended spacing for trees on steep slopes.) (Not a factor in Sunset Ridge) Remove all ladder fuels from under these remaining trees. Carefully prune trees to a height of at least 10 feet. Small clumps of 2 to 3 trees may be occasionally left in Zone 2. Leave more space between the crowns of these clumps and surrounding trees. Because Zone 2 forms an aesthetic buffer and provides a transition between zones, it is necessary to blend the requirements for Zones 1 and 3. Thin the portions of Zone 3 adjacent to Zone 2 more heavily than the outer portions. Isolated shrubs may remain, provided they are not under tree crowns. Prune and maintain these plants periodically to maintain vigorous growth. Remove dead stems from trees and shrubs annually. Where shrubs are the primary fuel in Zone 2, refer to the Special Recommendations section of this fact sheet.

Limit the number of dead trees (snags) retained in this area. Wildlife needs only one or two snags per acre. Be sure any snags left for wildlife cannot fall onto the house or block access roads or driveways. Mow grasses (or remove them with a weed trimmer) as needed through the growing season to keep them low, a maximum of 6 to 8 inches. This is extremely critical in the fall when grasses dry out and cure or in the spring after the snow is gone but before the plants green up.

Stack firewood and woodpiles uphill or on the same elevation as the structure but at least 30 feet away. Clear and keep away flammable vegetation within 10 feet of these woodpiles. Do not stack wood against your house or on or under your deck, even in winter. Many homes have burned from a woodpile that ignited as the fire passed. Wildfires can burn at almost any time in Colorado. Locate propane tanks at least 30 feet from any structures, preferably on the same elevation as the house. You don't want the LP container below your house — if it ignites, the fire would tend to burn uphill. On the other hand, if the tank is above your house and it develops a leak, LP gas will flow downhill into your home. Clear and keep away flammable vegetation within 10 feet of these tanks. Do not screen propane tanks with shrubs or vegetation. Dispose of slash (limbs, branches and other woody debris) from your trees and shrubs through chipping or by piling and burning. Contact your local CSFS office or county sheriff's office for information about burning slash piles. (We cannot recommend the following:.) If neither of these alternatives is possible, lop and scatter slash by cutting it into very small pieces and distributing it over the ground. Avoid heavy accumulations of slash. Lay it close to the ground to speed decomposition. If desired, no more than two or three small, widely spaced brush piles may be left for wildlife purposes. Locate these towards the outer portions of your defensible space.

### **Maintaining Your Defensible Space**

Your home is located in a forest that is dynamic and always changing. Trees and shrubs continue to grow, plants die or are damaged, new plants begin to grow, and plants drop their leaves and needles. Like other parts of your home, defensible space requires maintenance. Use the following checklist each year to determine if additional work or maintenance is necessary.

#### **Defensible Space and FireWise Annual Checklist**

- Trees and shrubs are properly thinned and pruned within the defensible space. Slash from the thinning is disposed of.
- Roof and gutters are clear of debris (pine needles).
- Branches overhanging the roof and chimney are removed.
- Chimney screens are in place and in good condition.
- Grass and weeds are mowed to a low height.
- An outdoor water supply is available, complete with a hose and nozzle that can reach all parts of the house.
- Fire extinguishers are checked and in working condition.
- The driveway is wide enough. The clearance of trees and branches is adequate for fire and emergency equipment. (Check with your local fire department.)
- Road signs and your name and house number are posted and easily visible.
- There is an easily accessible tool storage area with rakes, hoes, axes and shovels for use in case of fire.
- You have practiced family fire drills and your fire evacuation plan.
- Your escape routes, meeting points and other details are known and understood by all family members.
- Attic, roof, eaves and foundation vents are screened and in good condition.
- Stilt foundations and decks are enclosed, screened or walled up.
- Trash and debris accumulations are removed from the defensible space.
- A checklist for fire safety needs inside the home also has been completed. This is available from your local fire department.