



DEFENSIBLE SPACE MAINTENANCE GUIDE

Maintaining the **Defensible Space** around your home is an important part of reducing the risk of damage to your home and the injury or loss of life from a wildfire. It also provides a safe area for firefighters to help defend the home and slow the wildfire. The items listed here are only a portion of how defensible space should be maintained. For specific requirements on defensible space, please visit VCFD.org.



Defensible Space Zones. Zones 0, 1 and 2 currently make up the 100-feet of defensible space required by the Ventura County Fire Code. Areas beyond Zone 2 that require additional clearance is identified as Zone 3.

Zone 0 – Immediate (Ember-Resistant Zone)

Zone 0 extends first 0-5 feet from structures, outbuildings, attached decks and stairs. The ember resistant zone is designed to keep fire or embers from igniting materials that can spread fire to a building or structure.

Landscape requirements This should be a lean and clean noncombustible fire-resistant planting zone. Limit plants in this area to low growing, non-woody, properly maintained and watered plants. While plants are allowed in this zone, the VCFD recommends a no-planting zone, non-combustible zone.

Landscape Materials Not Permitted: Combustible mulch, wood chips, shredded wood chips, bark, shredded rubber mulch, and combustible landscape boards and timbers.



BAD



GOOD

Fire spotting across street into ornamental landscape:
<https://youtu.be/K5DSwPfiRs8>



Fuel Modification is the key component of creating a **Defensible Space**. Proper fuel modification includes spacing to break up the continuous path of fuel that could carry wildfire to your home and increases the chances that structures will survive a wildfire. Proper spacing of plants, shrubs, trees, and other vegetation is necessary and is required by law.



Recommended Non-Combustible Zone

Vines and Climbing plants: Remove climbing plants and vines from your home. They are considered a ladder fuel and can catch fire during a wildfire.



VCFD Recommends non-combustible fencing in Zone 0:

Wood fences burning to houses:
<https://youtu.be/PoPiC3Ugk94>

Existing Trees: Existing trees shall be trimmed 10 feet from chimneys or stove pipes. Limbs overhanging roofs and eaves shall be trimmed back 3 feet above any roof and 3 feet away from roof eaves.

BEFORE



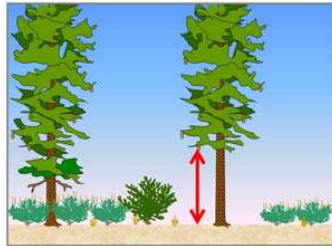
AFTER



New trees: New trees shall be planted so that the tree at full maturity will have its drip line 10 feet away from structures.

Tree Litter. Tree litter shall not exceed 2-inches in depth underneath tree canopies and shall be kept back a minimum of 12-inches from any tree trunk.

Trees exceeding 6-feet in height shall be limbed up from the ground 6-feet or 1/3 the height of the tree, whichever is less. Exception: Fruit trees when approved, shall provide a minimum 12-inch clearance above ground.



Ground cover and shrubs under trees shall have a horizontal distance of 3 feet from the trunk of the tree.

Trees overhanging roadways and driveways shall be maintained with a minimum vertical clearance of 13' 6" above the road and driveway surface.

Palm Trees: Palm trees of all types need to be maintained free from dead palm fronds.



Palm trees burning:
<https://youtu.be/4ntvLjvtwyQ>



Juniper & Italian Cypress fire:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQQ290ICJBU>

VCFD recommends removing any hazardous vegetation such as Junipers, Italian Cypress, and Acacia.



Acacia after fire

Roofs and Gutters. Roofs and gutters on buildings shall be maintained free of any leaves, needles, or other vegetative combustible materials.

BEFORE



AFTER

Zone 1 – Intermediate Zone

Zone 1 is the area within 5-30 feet from buildings or structures or to the property line, whichever is less. This zone is designed reduce the likelihood of a fire burning directly to the structure. Plants should be limited and separated into groups to limit the pathways for fire to burn up to the structure.



Zone 2 – Extended - Reduce Fuel Zone

Zone 2 extends 30-100 feet from buildings or structures or to the property line, whichever is less. This zone is designed to reduce flame heights, ember generation, reduce radiant heat and drop approaching crown fires in trees to the ground.



Greater spacing of vegetation should occur in this area.

All Zones:

Remove dead and dying plants, grass, and weeds (vegetation).

Trees shall be free of deadwood and litter.

Natural or annual grasses shall be mowed to a maximum height of 3-inch stubble with clippings removed.

Relocate firewood to Zone 2

IBHS Ember storm research:
<https://youtu.be/HjA9yLP1icg>



VCFD FHRP