

## Brush Control for Fire Safety

Spring is here, summer is rapidly approaching. The weather is starting to warm up, vegetation is drying up and now is the time to reduce the fire danger around your property. With longer days and relatively cooler temperatures now is a great time to clear the brush that is endangering your home. The weather is only going to get hotter, making this chore more unpleasant.

Look at your property the way that a firefighter might. If you were fighting a fire, would you want to be standing beside your home with a fire hose and a very limited supply of water? Can you see brush, dry grass, or other fuel near your house that makes it a dangerous place to be? Can fire use dry grass and brush like a ladder to climb into the trees and onto the roof? Are roads and driveways clear? If you answered yes or maybe to any of these questions, it's time to get out the work gloves and long sleeve shirt and get to work.

### Where Do You Start?

The first 100 feet around your home is the most critical area. Known as the defensible space, this is where firefighters battling a wildland fire can make a stand to protect your property. If you don't keep the defensible space relatively clear of flammable materials, firefighters are unlikely to attempt save your home. Without your help, it is simply too dangerous and difficult to fight an approaching fire.

Temperatures generated by a wildland fire can be extreme. The intense heat of a wildland fire can actually ignite window coverings and furniture through unbroken glass. Clearing near your home gives the fire an opportunity to cool down some as it approaches your home.

While your defensible space does not have to be a moonscape, having just a few well spaced shrubs makes it more difficult for fire to reach your home. Grass should be mowed low. Leaves and other dead vegetation should be cleaned up. Rake dead leaves from under shrubs. Your defensible space is a good place to put an irrigated lawn.

If you live on a hillside, downhill from your house is the next place to look. Fire travels uphill. Clear farther away from your home on steep hills, up to 100 feet.

Next, look at your driveway. Firefighters are reluctant to use a driveway with overhanging branches that may snag valuable equipment that hangs on the truck. Brush along your driveway makes it more difficult for them and you to escape in an emergency.

Roadsides and under power lines should be your next priority. Roads can make effective fire breaks. Clearing out some of the brush along them increases that effectiveness. Also roads are one of the more likely places for wildland fires to start. Careless smokers, metal dragging behind vehicles, and hot mufflers in contact with tall grass are common sources of wildland fire ignition. Clearing along roads helps firefighters in their initial attack - suppressing the fire before it can grow.

You can have an attractive landscape and be fire safe. Now is the time to act to protect your home and family.

Please contact the Farm Advisor's office at <http://cecalaveras.ucdavis.edu> or 754-6477 with your agricultural questions.