



5.11 Wildfire defensible buffer zones

Buffer zones can be used to reduce fire damage to buildings and sensitive areas in landscapes prone to wildfire.

Zone 1. A minimum of 30 feet is needed for firefighters to protect a structure from wildfire. On a slope, increase the distance to 100 feet downhill of the structure. Use low growing and low flammability plants, spaced apart from each other. Remove dead material.

Zone 2. Deciduous trees and shrubs and widely-spaced conifers may be used in Zone 2. Remove branches within 8 feet of the ground (but no more than 30 percent of the height of the tree) and space trees so that crowns remain at least 10 feet apart at maturity. Remove ladder fuels which are tree limbs and other materials that allow fire to burn into the tree crown.

Zone 3. Manage this zone to maintain forest stand health and other landowner objectives. Limit number of dead trees or snags but save some for wildlife (1 to 2 snags/acre).

Check with your local forester for additional guidelines.

Characteristics of low flammability plants

- Supple moist leaves and water-like, thin sap
- Little or no accumulation of dead vegetation on the plant
- Open and loose branching structure

5.11 References

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