

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION**

**FUEL BREAK
(Ac.)
CODE 383**

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

Procedures, technical details, and other information listed below provide additional guidance for carrying out selected components of the named practice. This material is referenced from the conservation practice standard for the named practice and supplements the requirements and considerations listed therein.

WIDTH OF FUEL BREAK

A fuel break provides more fire protection and suppression benefits when supplementing a firebreak (See practice standard 394). It will provide a wider protection distance of reduced fuels when added to the 15-30 feet width of the firebreak.

Width of the fuel break will depend on the type and height of the forest vegetation plus the slope of the area to be protected.

The minimum width of the fuel break will be 50 feet. This may be widened for slope increases or heavier fuel conditions. In those cases, a distance equal to the height of the trees in the fuel break will be added to the minimum width.

SEPARATION DISTANCES

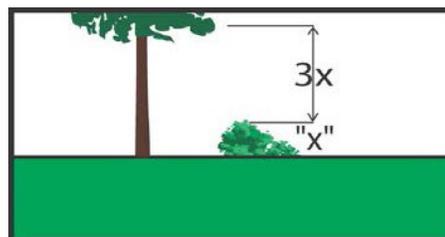
Vegetation will be managed within the fuel break to maintain a minimum separation distance between trees, shrubs, and forest canopy layers.

Separation distances between trees within the fuel break will be 20 feet between the edges of the tree crowns (not the trunks).

Separation distances between shrubs and small trees (less than an average 15 feet in height) will be two times their height on 0-20% slopes and four times their height on slopes over 20%.

Vertical separation distances are also needed between the strata layers of the forest canopies. The recommended separation of these ladder fuels will be three times the height of the shrub layer.

Remove ladder fuels, vegetation that serves as a link between grass, shrubs, and tree crowns. Trees and large shrubs will be pruned to provide the required clearance (See practice code 660).



Separation between canopy layers

Trees and shrubs removed for fuels reduction and separation will be cut no higher than 12" above the ground. Prevent re-growth of cut shrub stumps by applying herbicide if desired. Follow herbicide label directions.

TREATMENT OF WOODY DEBRIS

Remove, pile and burn, or chip all cut, dead, or dying woody materials.

All standing dead or dying trees and shrubs within the fuel break must be removed.

Remove all dead materials that are solid (not rotten) and not already embedded into the soil layer.

Reduce the leaf or needle layer through prescribed burning.

Remove all dead tree branches from live trees to a height of 15 feet.

LOCATION OF FUEL BREAK

Fuel breaks will be located perpendicular to the wind on the windward side of the area to be protected. The best locations are on ridge crests and valley bottoms.

They may also be used to protect homes and other structures, especially when used in conjunction with a firebreak. This concept is also recognized by the FireWise program as “defensible space,” or treated area between homes and the wildland that has been maintained and treated to resist wildfire. While no landscape can be fire-proof, the use of defensible space, like fuel breaks, greatly reduces the risk of fires spreading to structures,

flower beds and other areas common to the wildland/urban interface. Additional FireWise recommendations include: the storage of firewood and flammable fuels at least 30 feet from the structure; and the pruning and trimming of trees away from the rooftops and walls of a structure or outbuildings.

Other considerations for the effectiveness of defensible space involve the presence of yard debris and the accumulation of vehicles, and other items of domestic nature in and about the yard or the residence. These items can contribute to fire spread and structural ignition when present in this 30 feet immediately surrounding the residence.

PRESCRIBED BURN PLAN

A prescribed burn plan is required prior to the implementation of a burn if used in combination with this practice (See Prescribed Burning practice code 338). This plan will be formulated by a trained and qualified individual. All NRCS conservation plans will indicate the need for the prescribed burn plan. See Job Sheet 338 for the prescribed burn plan worksheets.