

FUEL BREAK**383****CONSERVATION PRACTICE FACT SHEET****DEFINITION**

A strip or block of land on which the vegetation, debris, and detritus have been reduced and/or modified to control or reduce the risk of fire movement.

PURPOSE

Control and reduce the risk of the spread of fire.

BENEFITS

1. Protection from destructive wildfires.
2. Reduced damages to residual forest stand.
3. Prevention of accidental damage to neighboring properties during a prescribed burn.

WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES:

All land uses where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

Specifications

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.

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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.

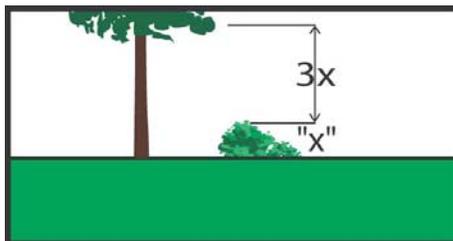
Vegetation will be managed within the fuel break to maintain a minimum separation distance between trees, shrubs, and forest canopy layers.

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 may be pruned to provide the required clearance.



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.

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

Reduce the leaf or needle layer through prescribed burning.

Site-specific requirements are listed on the specifications sheet. Additional provisions are entered on the job sketch sheet. Specifications are prepared in accordance with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide. See practice standard Fuel break, code 383.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE:

Treat or graze vegetative fuel breaks to avoid a build-up of excess litter and to control noxious and invasive plants.

Inspect all fuel breaks for woody materials such as dead tree limbs or downed trees and remove or treat as necessary to maintain the desired level of fire spread risk.

Inspect fuel breaks at frequencies to assure that the desired level of fire spread risk is maintained.