

## FUEL BREAK SPECIFICATIONS

### Description

**Fuel Break Use:** Fuel breaks are used as a facilitating practice within a conservation management system. Forest stands and dwellings or structures can be threatened by vegetation conditions conducive to wildfire movement across the landscape. Fuel breaks combined with fire breaks improve fire protection, enhance fire suppression efforts within the forest and create a defensible space around dwellings and structures.

**Fuel Break Width:** 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 30 feet. It may be widened for steep slopes (>12%) or heavier fuel conditions. In these cases, a distance equal to the height of the trees in the fuel break will be added to the minimum width.

### Fuel Break Management

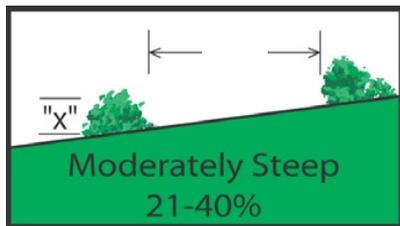
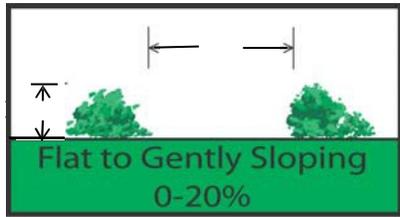
**Separation Distances:** Vegetation will be managed within the fuel break to maintain a minimum separation distance between shrubs, trees, and forest canopy layers. Separation distances between shrubs and small trees (less than an average 15 feet in height) will be two times their height on 0-12% slopes and four times their height on slopes over 12% (Chart 1). Separation distances between the edges of the tree crowns (not the trunks) within the fuel break will be 10 feet on 0-12% slopes and 20 feet on slopes greater than 12% (Chart 2). 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 (Chart 3). 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).

**Treating Woody Debris:** Trees and shrubs may be removed mechanically and/or by hand. Residual stumps will be no higher than 12" above the ground. Re-growth of cut shrub stumps can be prevented by applying herbicide. 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. Reduce the leaf or needle layer through prescribed burning. Remove all dead tree branches from live trees to a height of 15 feet.

**Fuel Break Location:** 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.

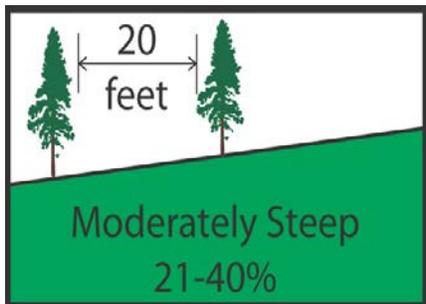
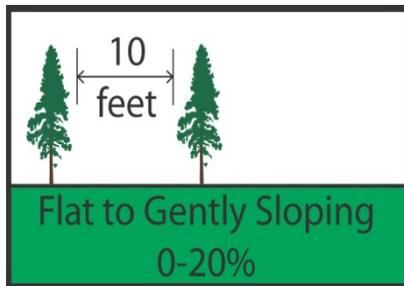
They may also be used to protect homes and other structures, especially when used in conjunction with a firebreak. This concept is also recognized by the FireWise program as "defensible space," or treated area between homes and the wildland that has been maintained and treated to resist wildfire. While 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.

**CHART 1. SEPARATION DISTANCES NEEDED FOR SHRUBS (Structures and Forested Areas)**



Note: Shrub separation distances are measured between canopies (outer most branches) and not between trunks.

**CHART 2. SEPARATION DISTANCES NEEDED BETWEEN TREE CANOPIES (Structures and Forested Areas)**



Note: Tree separation distances are measured between canopies (outer most branches) and not between trunks. In forested areas, the recommended tree canopy separation distance is determined by slope.

**CHART 3. VERTICAL SEPARATION DISTANCES NEEDED BETWEEN FUEL LAYERS (Structures and Forested Areas)**

