

**Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Conservation Practice Standard**

**FIREBREAK  
(Ft.)  
CODE 394**

**DEFINITION**

A strip of bare land or fire-retarding vegetation.

**PURPOSE**

To protect soil, water, and plant resources by reducing or preventing damage from fire.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On areas where damaging fires are likely or where fire may be prescribed as a cultural or protective measure.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Water quantity

Effects on the components of the water budget.

Water quality

- Effects on erosion and the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substances that would be carried by runoff.
- Effects on the movement of dissolved substances to ground water.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

1. Clean-tilled firebreaks

- a. All vegetation should be thoroughly destroyed and mineral soil exposed on a strip at least 10 feet wide by disking or shallow-plowing.
- b. Water bars, turnouts, or other water control measures should be constructed as needed for drainage and to control erosion. Portions needing additional protection from erosion will be vegetated. Refer to Vegetated Firebreaks, item 2, below.

- c. Firebreaks should be located along public roads adjacent to woodlands and along the entire boundary of woodland subject to wildfire hazard. Sufficient interior firebreaks should be located so as to enclose no more than about 160 acres with a firebreak on very large tracts and no more than 30 to 40 acres on small tracts. Firebreaks should be terminated at roads, streams, cultivated fields, or other barriers where possible, with no gaps left through which wildfire might enter.

- e. Woods roads and woods trails may be used as firebreaks or firebreaks may be used as roads and trails, provided a strip at least 10 feet wide is maintained as described above or is graveled.

2. Vegetated firebreaks

- a. All firebreaks may be vegetated for added fire control, wildlife food, or livestock forage, but they must be widened to permit sufficient sunlight to reach the vegetation.

- b. All vegetated firebreaks will be at least 30 feet wide (at least 50 feet wide in George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River, and Stone Counties).

- c. Vegetated firebreaks should be established to plants which remain green during the winter and spring such as fescue, wild winter peas, vetch, clovers, carpetgrass, small grains, or any combination. Refer to Wildlife Upland Habitat Management (645) for seeding specifications.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- d. Vegetated firebreaks should be fertilized annually as needed when they are expected to furnish grazing for livestock.
- e. Maintenance should be by grazing or bush-hogging as needed to reduce the vegetation to no more than 6 inches high prior to September 1.
- f. Utility rights-of-way may be used as vegetated firebreaks providing they meet the minimum width and are maintained as described above.
- g. Vegetated firebreaks may be used as woods roads or trails provided they are maintained as described above.

