

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

FIREBREAK

(Ft.)

CODE 394

DEFINITION

A permanent or temporary strip of bare or vegetated land planned to retard fire.

PURPOSE

- Reduce the spread of wildfire.
- Contain prescribed burns.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all land uses where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent and shall consist of fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or a combination of these.

Firebreaks will be of sufficient width and length to contain the expected fire.

Firebreaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources being protected.

Erosion control measures shall be installed to prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Plant species selected for vegetated firebreaks will be noninvasive and capable of retarding fire.

Refer to the Firebreak Design Procedure (394DP) for additional information and requirements.

CONSIDERATIONS

Use barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds, rock cliffs, roads, field borders, skid trails, landings, drainage canals, railroads, utility right-of-ways, cultivated land, or other areas as existing firebreaks. Electric lines can be hazardous in heavy smoke as they may conduct electricity.

When using barriers consider the effects on wildlife and fisheries.

Attempt to locate firebreaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms.

If winds are predictable, firebreaks should be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Consider using diverse species combinations which best meet locally native wildlife and pollinator needs.

Locate on the contour where practicable to minimize risk of soil erosion.

Design and layout should include multiple uses.

Consider the beneficial and other effects of installation of the firebreak on cultural resources and threatened and endangered species, natural areas, riparian areas and wetlands.

Consider planting wildlife food plots as firebreaks when wildlife management objectives are being considered.

Consider the timing and re-growth needed to maintain long-term health and vigor of herbaceous vegetation when shredding/mowing/haying vegetation.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#) or visit the [Field Office Technical Guide](#).

**NE-T.G. Notice TGN
619
Section IV
NRCS-SEPTEMBER
2010**

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Consider the use of prescribed burns to minimize the potential of wildfire.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan and the burn plan, or other acceptable documentation. The prescribed burn, using the NE-ECS-72 Prescribed Burn Management Plan, will contain information on firebreak design. The location of firebreaks for prescribed burns or reducing the risks of wildfire will be documented on the conservation plan map.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Mow, disk, or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a build-up of excess litter and to control weeds. Treatment should be timed to reduce impacts to wildlife nesting when possible.

Inspect all firebreaks for woody materials such as dead limbs or blown down trees and remove them from the firebreak.

Inspect firebreaks at least annually and rework bare ground firebreaks as necessary to keep them clear of flammable vegetation.

Repair erosion control measures as necessary to ensure proper function.

Access by vehicles or people will be controlled to prevent damage.

Bare ground firebreaks, which are no longer needed, will be stabilized with permanent vegetation.

Refer to 394DP for additional O&M guidance

REFERENCES

NRCS Nebraska Firebreak Design Procedure (394DP)

<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE394DP.pdf>

NRCS Nebraska NE-CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation Worksheet

[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-52\(Environmental_Evaluation_for_Conservation_Planning\).xlsx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-52(Environmental_Evaluation_for_Conservation_Planning).xlsx)

NRCS Nebraska NE-ECS-72 Prescribed Burn Management Plan

http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-ECS-72_Prescribed_Burn_Management_Plan.pdf

NRCS Nebraska Prescribed Burning (338)

<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE338.pdf>