

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**FIREBREAK**

(Feet)

CODE 394

**DEFINITION**

A strip of bare land or vegetation that retards fire.

**PURPOSES**

To protect soil, water, air, plant, animal and human resources by preventing spread of wildfire or to control prescribed burns.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

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

**CRITERIA**

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

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

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

Species selection will be based on their attributes in retarding fire and ease of maintenance.

Erosion control measures shall prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Comply with applicable state and local laws and regulations, including the state's Best Management Practices (BMPs).

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Use existing barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds, rock cliffs, roads, drainage canals,

railroads, utility right-of-way, and cultivated land as natural firebreaks.

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

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.

Select plant species that provide wildlife habitat if compatible with purpose.

Consult with local fire departments to locate firebreaks where mutual benefits can be achieved.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Mow or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a build-up of dead litter and to control weeds.

Inspect for and remove woody materials such as dead limbs and blown down trees from firebreak.

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

Inspect annually and rework erosion control measures as necessary to ensure proper function.

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

Bare ground firebreaks which are no longer needed will be stabilized.