

California Code of Regulations
Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures

§ 1299. Defensible Space. [Repealed]

§ 1299.01. Purpose.

The intent of this regulation is to provide guidance for implementation of Public Resources Code Section 4291 to improve safety for fire fighters defending a home as well as increase the survivability of a "Building or Structure" as defined, that exists in grass, brush, and forest covered lands within the designated State Responsibility Area (SRA) of California.

§ 1299.02. Definitions.

The following definitions apply to this article:

(a) Defensible space. The buffer that landowners are required to create on their property between a "Building or Structure" and the plants, brush and trees or other items surrounding the "Building or Structure" that could ignite in the event of a fire.

(b) Building or Structure. Anything constructed that is designed or intended for support, enclosure, shelter, or protection of persons, animals, or property, having a permanent roof that is supported by walls or posts that connect to, or rest on the ground.

(c) Outbuilding. Buildings or structures that are less than one hundred-twenty (120) square feet in size and not used for human habitation. For purposes of this Section, an "Outbuilding" is not a "Building or Structure" as defined in subsection (b) above.

§ 1299.03. Requirements.

Defensible space is required to be maintained at all times, whenever flammable vegetative conditions exist. One hundred feet (100 ft.) of defensible space clearance shall be maintained in two distinct "Zones" as follows: "Zone 1" extends thirty feet (30 ft.) out from each "Building or Structure," or to the property line, whichever comes first; "Zone 2" extends from thirty feet (30 ft.) to one hundred feet (100 ft.) from each "Building or Structure," but not beyond the property line. The vegetation treatment requirements for Zone 1 are more restrictive than for Zone 2, as provided in (a) and (b) below. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's "Property Inspection Guide, 2000 version, April 2000," provides additional guidance on vegetation treatment within Zone 1 and Zone 2, but is not mandatory and is not intended as a substitute for these regulations. This publication may be

found on the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) website at: http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/fire_er/fpp_engineering_view?guide_id=8

(a) Zone 1 Requirements:

(1) Remove all dead or dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves, weeds, and pine needles from the Zone whether such vegetation occurs in yard areas around the "Building or Structure," on the roof or rain gutters of the "Building or Structure," or any other location within the Zone.

(2) Remove dead tree or shrub branches that overhang roofs, below or adjacent to windows, or which are adjacent to wall surfaces, and keep all branches a minimum of ten feet (10 ft.) away from chimney and stovepipe outlets.

(3) Relocate exposed firewood piles outside of Zone 1 unless they are completely covered in a fire resistant material.

(4) Remove flammable vegetation and items that could catch fire which are adjacent to or under combustible decks, balconies and stairs.

(b) Zone 2 Requirements:

(1) In this zone create horizontal and vertical spacing among shrubs and trees using the "Fuel Separation" method, the "Continuous Tree Canopy" method or a combination of both to achieve defensible space clearance requirements. Further guidance regarding these methods is contained in the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's, "General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space, February 8, 2006," incorporated herein by reference, and the "Property Inspection Guide" referenced elsewhere in this regulation. The "General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space" may be found on the Board's website at: http://www.fire.ca.gov/CDFBOFDB/pdfs/Copyof4291finalguidelines_9_2_9_06.pdf.

(2) In both the Fuel Separation and Continuous Tree Canopy methods the following standards apply:

(A) Dead and dying woody surface fuels and aerial fuels shall be removed. Loose surface litter, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches, shall be permitted to a maximum depth of three inches (3 in.).

(B) Cut annual grasses and forbs down to a maximum height of four inches (4 in.).

(C) All exposed wood piles must have a minimum of ten feet (10 ft.) of clearance, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions.

(c) For both Zones 1 and 2:

(1) "Outbuildings" and Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) storage tanks shall have the following minimum clearance: ten feet (10 ft.) of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional ten feet (10 ft.) around their exterior.

(2) Protect water quality. Do not clear vegetation to bare mineral soil and avoid the use of heavy equipment in and around streams and seasonal drainages. Vegetation removal can cause soil erosion, especially on steep slopes. Keep soil disturbance to a minimum on steep slopes.

§ 1299.04. Additional Clearance.

(a) An insurance company that insures an occupied "Building or Structure" may require additional clearance beyond that required under § 1299.03 only if a fire expert designated by the Director provides findings that the clearing is necessary.

(b) Within the intent of the regulations, a fire expert designated by the Director may require more than one hundred feet (100 ft.) of defensible space. A fire expert cannot require additional defensible space clearance beyond the property line.

(c) Further guidance to property owners on implementation of this regulation is contained in the "General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space" and the "Property Inspection Guide," both of which are referenced elsewhere in this regulation.

§ 1299.05. Alternative Methods.

The provisions of these regulations are not intended to exclude alternative methods not specifically prescribed by these regulations. A fire expert designated by the Director may approve alternative practices which provide for the same practical effects as those stated in these regulations.