



Northstar Community Services District Wildfire Defensible Space Disclosure Form

Northstar Fire
Department
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Legal Requirements

A signed copy of this Wildfire Defensible Space Disclosure Form (Form) must be returned to the Northstar Community Services District (NCSO or District) and a defensible space inspection must be completed prior to the close of escrow, pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) section 4291, California Code of Regulations (CCR) title 14, section 1299.03, and NCSO Ordinance 35-19.

Are You Prepared?

The NCSO area has been designated a **Very High Fire Severity Zone** by Cal Fire. This Form contains important information regarding the defensible space requirements in effect within NCSO boundaries, and is to be reviewed and acknowledged by the Buyer of real property within the District.

Disclosure Document

During escrow, the Buyer must review the information provided in this Form, sign in acknowledgment of receipt, return a signed copy to the District, and include a copy in the transfer documentation packet that the Buyer retains.

The purpose of the defensible space requirements is to reduce the likelihood of wildfire spreading to homes. NCSO requires all homeowners to maintain their property in compliance with these state, county, and local laws to create a “defensible space” around the home.

Prior to the close of escrow the Seller of real property within the District must request a defensible space inspection. If an inspection report identifies violations, the Seller is not obligated to make corrections prior to the close of escrow or transfer of ownership, but the Buyer assumes responsibility for correcting any and all remaining violations within the time frame noted on the inspection report. Failure to comply with defensible space requirements will subject a property owner to the enforcement measures identified in NCSO Ordinance 35-19.

Attached is a summary of defensible space inspection requirements (along with a “Checklist” providing an explanation for each inspection requirement) to assist the Buyer and Seller in identifying potential areas of concern. Homes are also periodically inspected by the Northstar Fire Department for compliance. The Fire Department identifies requirements for home owners and sets timelines for remediation. NCSO is authorized to enforce the state, county and local defensible space requirements to the fullest extent of the law to ensure compliance.

Signatures:

The undersigned acknowledge that they have received a copy of this Form:

Buyer(s) _____ **Date** _____

Street Address of Property _____

Assessor’s Parcel Number _____

Defensible Space Inspection Requirements

- A. Clear all combustible ground fuels within 5' of a structure
- B. Remove all flammable vegetation within 10' of a structure
- C. Maintain a layer of pine needle/forest duff depth of 1" to a maximum of 2"
- D. Remove any tree limbs within 10' horizontally or vertically from structure
- E. Prune lower branches of trees to a height of 6' to 15' (or 1/3 tree height for trees under 18')
- F. Remove all branches within 10' of chimney or stovepipe outlet
- G. Remove leaves, needles or other vegetation on roofs, gutters, decks, porches, stairways
- H. Remove all dead and dying trees, branches, & shrubs or other plants adjacent to overhanging buildings
- I. Remove all dead and dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves, weeds & needles
- J. Remove or separate live flammable ground cover & shrubs
- K. Remove flammable vegetation & items that could catch fire adjacent to or below combustible decks/balconies/stairways
- L. Relocate firewood piles at least 30' from any structure or cover with fire resistive materials (tarps)
- M. Cut annual grasses & forbs to a maximum of 4 inches in height
- N. Remove fuels in accordance with fuel separation or CTC guidelines
- O. All firewood piles must have a minimum of 10 ft clearance down to bare mineral soil
- P. Dead & dying woody surface fuels & aerial fuels shall be removed
- Q. Logs or stumps embedded in the soil must be removed or isolated from other vegetation
- R. Outbuildings & liquid propane gas storage tanks shall have 10' of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10'
- S. Address numbers shall be displayed in contrasting colors (6 inches minimum size) & readable from the street or access road
- T. Equipment chimney or stovepipe will have metal screens with openings between 3/8" & 1/2"
- U. Recommend clear vegetation 10' from sides & 15' above all driveways & turnaround areas
- V. All suppressed trees acting as ladder fuels must be removed.

Checklist Explanations

Each letter/definition below corresponds to those letters/questions noted on the inspection form.

A. Clear all combustible ground fuels within 5' of your structure (NCSO Ord. 35-19). Wildfire science has shown that those structures with the least amount of combustible materials or vegetation immediately around the structure have a greater survivability. Create a buffer zone that offers 5' of clearance from your structure void of all combustible materials and vegetation. This buffer zone should be cleared down to mineral soil, rock, brick or stone.

B. Remove all flammable vegetation within 10' of your structure (NCSO Ord. 35-19). Wildfire Science has shown that those structures with the least amount of combustible materials or vegetation immediately around the structure have a greater survivability. Remove all flammable vegetation within 10' of your structure. A few examples of flammable vegetation you will be required to remove are: Manzanita, Tobacco and Bitter Brush. To see those types of species of vegetation you may keep or plant within this area, please consider reviewing the document/list entitled "Water-Retentive Vegetation" located on the District's website at www.northstarcsd.org.

C. Maintain a layer of pine needles/forest duff depth of between 1" to a maximum of 2" (NCSO Ord. 35-19). Decomposing layers of pine needles, twigs and other organic debris (known as duff) when on fire can pre-heat live vegetation and ignite trees, or the tree's roots can be damaged from the intense heat. Starting at 5' out from your structure and up to your property lines, maintain a layer of pine needles/forest duff of between 1" to a maximum of 2".

D. Remove any tree limbs within 10' horizontally or vertically from a structure (NCSO Ord. 35-19). To help reduce the possibility of fire spreading from the trees (or, their limbs) to your structure (or, vice versa), you must remove any tree limbs that are within 10' vertically and horizontally of your structure.

E. Prune all lower tree limbs/branches to a minimum of 6-15' (Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF) General Guidelines, Item 4b).

To help reduce the opportunity for fire to spread from the ground into the trees (canopy), trees must be limbed up to 6-15' – measured from the lowest hanging portion of the tree's drip line to the ground. (For shorter trees, remove limbs on the bottom third of the tree. Taking more than this amount can be detrimental to the tree's health.)

F. Remove all branches 10' from any stovepipe or chimney outlet (PRC § 4291(a)(4)). To help reduce the possibility of fire spreading from the trees (or, their limbs) to your structure (or, vice versa), you must remove any tree limbs that are within 10' of your stovepipe or chimney.

G. Remove leaves, needles or other vegetation on roofs, gutters, decks, porches and stairways (PRC § 4291(a)(6)). If fiery embers land in leaves, needles or other vegetation resting on your home's roof, gutters, deck, porch, stairways, etc., the odds of your home catching fire have increased.

H. Remove all dead or dying trees, branches, shrubs or other plants adjacent to or overhanging buildings (PRC § 4291(a)(5) and 14 CCR § 1299.03(a)(2)).

Dead or dying trees are hazardous because they will fall, in time, and could damage property, or injure or kill a person. In addition, the dry wood of a dead tree is a tremendous fire hazard. Dying trees might be an indication of failing forest health due to disease. Removing such trees (before they are completely dead) can reduce the likelihood of recurrence or spread. During defensible space inspections, the fire department will indicate which trees need to be removed by way of a blue paint dot applied at the base of the tree. Dead and dying vegetation that is also highly flammable in nature is a very hazardous combination. As for bushes that need to be removed, the inspector will spray blue paint on the limbs/leaves of a bush. The blue paint on a bush indicates that the ENTIRE bush must be removed.

I. Remove all dead and dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves, weeds & needles (PRC § 4291(a)(1)).

Dead or dying grass, leaves, needles or downed woody materials are all surface fuels that may increase the intensity of fires. The naturally occurring woody material (dead branches, pine cones, bark chunks, etc.) and leaves and needles must be removed within 30' of your structure.

J. Remove or separate live flammable ground cover & shrubs (PRC § 4291(a)(1) and BOF General Guidelines).

For areas with dense brush, the recommended separation distance is dependent upon shrub height and steepness of slope.

Note: Separation distances are measured between canopies (outermost branches) and not between trunks. For example: if your home is located on a 10% slope and the brush is four feet tall, the separation distance would be two times the shrub height or eight feet. The recommended separation distance can be accomplished by removing plants or through pruning that reduces the diameter or height of shrubs (shorter height means less separation is needed.) All brush required to be removed will be marked with a blue paint.

K. Remove flammable vegetation & items that could catch fire adjacent to or below combustible decks/balconies/stairways (14 CCR § 1299.03(a)(3)).

Do not store anything flammable or combustible under your decks, balconies or stairways that could allow the start of or propagation of fire.

L. Relocate firewood piles at least 30' from any structure or cover with fire resistive materials (tarps) (NCSD Ord. 35-19).

Unless located/stored in an enclosed structure protected from any and all flying embers, all firewood and woodpiles must be fully wrapped with a fire-retardant tarp. Or,...Relocate all firewood and woodpiles exposed to flying embers 30 feet from a structure unless fully covered with a fire retardant tarp.

Firewood and woodpiles moved 30 feet from the structure must have enough clearance not to convey fire to the surrounding vegetation.

M. Cut annual grasses & forbs to maximum of 4 inches in height (14 CCR § 1299.03(b)(2)(B)).

This is critical in the fall, when grasses dry out, and in the spring, after the snow is gone but before plants green-up.

N. Removal fuels in accordance with fuel separation or CTC guidelines (PRC § 4291(a)(1) and NCSD Ord. 35-19).

Maintain shrubs on the entire property according to the minimum horizontal spacing between edges of shrubs based on the slope of the property as follows:

- (a) 0-20% slope - Two times the height of the shrub
- (b) 21-40% slope - Four times the height of the shrub
- (c) Slopes greater than 40% - Six times the height of the shrub

All trees the District or the State classifies as intermediate or co-dominant must have the following spacing distances between tree canopies or groups of trees:

- (a) 0-20% slope - Ten feet of canopy spacing
- (b) 21-40% slope - Twenty feet of canopy spacing
- (c) Slopes greater than 40% - Thirty feet of canopy spacing

All trees or brush required to be removed will be marked with a blue paint.

O. All firewood piles must have a minimum of 10 feet of clearance down to bare soil (14 CCR 1299.03(b)(2)(C).)

The safest way to protect firewood piles or stacks from catching and spreading fire is to make sure there is nothing combustible under, above and along the sides that can ignite.

P. Dead & dying woody surface fuels & aerial fuels shall be removed (14 CCR 1299.03(b)(2)(A)).

Reducing excessive dead or downed trees, branches, pine cones, log stumps and other fuels diminishes fire risk.

Q. Logs or stumps embedded in soil must be removed or isolated from structures and other vegetation (PRC § 4291(a)(1)).

The objective in fuel reduction is to remove enough fuel so that when a wildfire burns, it is less severe and can be more easily managed and suppressed. Some logs and stumps might be allowed to remain to help with soil erosion.

All logs or stumps required to be removed will be marked with a blue paint.

R. Outbuildings & liquid propane gas storage tanks shall have 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet (14 CCR 1299.03(c)(1)).

Ensuring the proper clearance helps prevent direct flame impingement upon the outbuildings and the propane tanks themselves.

S. Address numbers shall be displayed in contrasting colors (6 inches minimum size) and readable from the street or access road (2016 CFC 5051 and NCSD Ord. 33-16).

Responding emergency responders need to be able to see your address as distinctly and clearly from the roadside in sometimes the most obstructed conditions.

T. Equipment chimney or stovepipe will have metal screen with openings between 3/8 inches and 1/2 inches (2016 CBC 2113.9.2 and NCSD Ord. 33-16).

The smaller the diameter of the openings of the mesh screens the less possibility of fiery embers being emitted into the air.

U. Recommend clear vegetation 10 feet from sides and 15 feet above all driveways and turnaround areas.

The greater the clearance of vegetation in and around your driveways and turnarounds the less likely emergency vehicles will be impaired from entering and protecting your property from wildland fire. Additionally, should you have to escape your own driveway, the greater clearance of vegetation will provide you with a safer path of travel should there be a wildland fire on your property.