

100' Defensible Space Update

February 21, 2006



In January 2005 a new state law became effective that extended the defensible space clearance around homes and structures from 30 feet to 100 feet. Proper clearance to 100 feet dramatically increases the chance of your house surviving a wildfire. This defensible space also provides for firefighter safety when protecting homes during a wildland fire. The following is the latest information to come out of last year's new law:

- State law now requires 100 feet of defensible space clearance in most rural areas of California. Some local jurisdictions have ordinances that require more than 100 feet while many municipalities may have no requirements
- ***The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection on Wednesday, February 8, 2006 adopted defensible space regulations and guidelines designed to advise homeowners on how to comply with the new 100 foot requirement.***
- ***After the board adopts final language, it must be approved by the Office of Administrative Law before it becomes official. This process usually takes 30 days. The official regulations and guidelines are expected to become effective in April 2006.***
- Now that the board language is nearly finalized, CDF is embarking on a training program for its inspectors. Delivery of this training is expected in April, 2006.
- CDF is also preparing public information documents, brochures, and web content to explain to homeowners how to comply with the new regulations. The basis of this information will be the guidance document prepared by the board. This guidance document takes into account the extreme variability of California's vegetation and ecological zones.
- Since the state law now requires 100 feet of defensible space, and even though these guidance documents are not yet official, CDF is performing inspections out to 100 feet from homes. Until such time that these regulations become effective, staff has been advised to use common sense and professional judgment when advising homeowners on whether they are in compliance with the 100 foot clearance requirement.
- CDF recognizes that for some homeowners 100 foot compliance can be difficult, may require hard work, and in some cases can be a financial burden. Therefore, the guidelines offer alternatives to achieve defensible space and reduce wildfire intensity.
- If compliance is met out to 30 feet, but not 100 feet, the homeowner will receive a written notice of violation, (similar to a traffic "fix it ticket") with recommendations to reduce the fire hazard. The board and the department wish to emphasize an educational and cooperative approach with the public to reduce fire hazards.