

Santa Clara County FireSafe Council



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Defensible Space & Ember Awareness

Our mission

“Mobilizing the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfires.”



Today's Goals

- Defensible space concepts
- Ember Awareness
- Prepare you to analyze your own property
- Many examples
- Q&A

Defensible Space

- Creates a safe area for firefighters to protect a home
- Defensible space reduces fuels
- Protects homes
- Helps keep forests healthy



1. Immediate Zone: 0-5 feet

Gray Zone

- no plants
- nothing flammable
- hardscapes
 - boulders
 - birdbaths
 - pathways





When you look out the window
you look right over this area

2. Intermediate Zone 5-30 feet

Green Zone

- Manicured & Irrigated
- Intermixed with hardscape features
- Control vertical and horizontal spacing



Zone 5'-30'



- Avoid continuous plantings right up to your home
- Remove tree branches within 10' of your home
- Use hardscape in a network to reduce amount of fuel

Vertical and Horizon Spacing are key

Vertical Space

- Vertical flame height is 3-5 times height of plant
- Limb up trees
- Keep bushes low

Horizontal distance

- 3-6 feet between plants
- Keep dead portions cleaned up
- Keep leaves and needles cleaned up

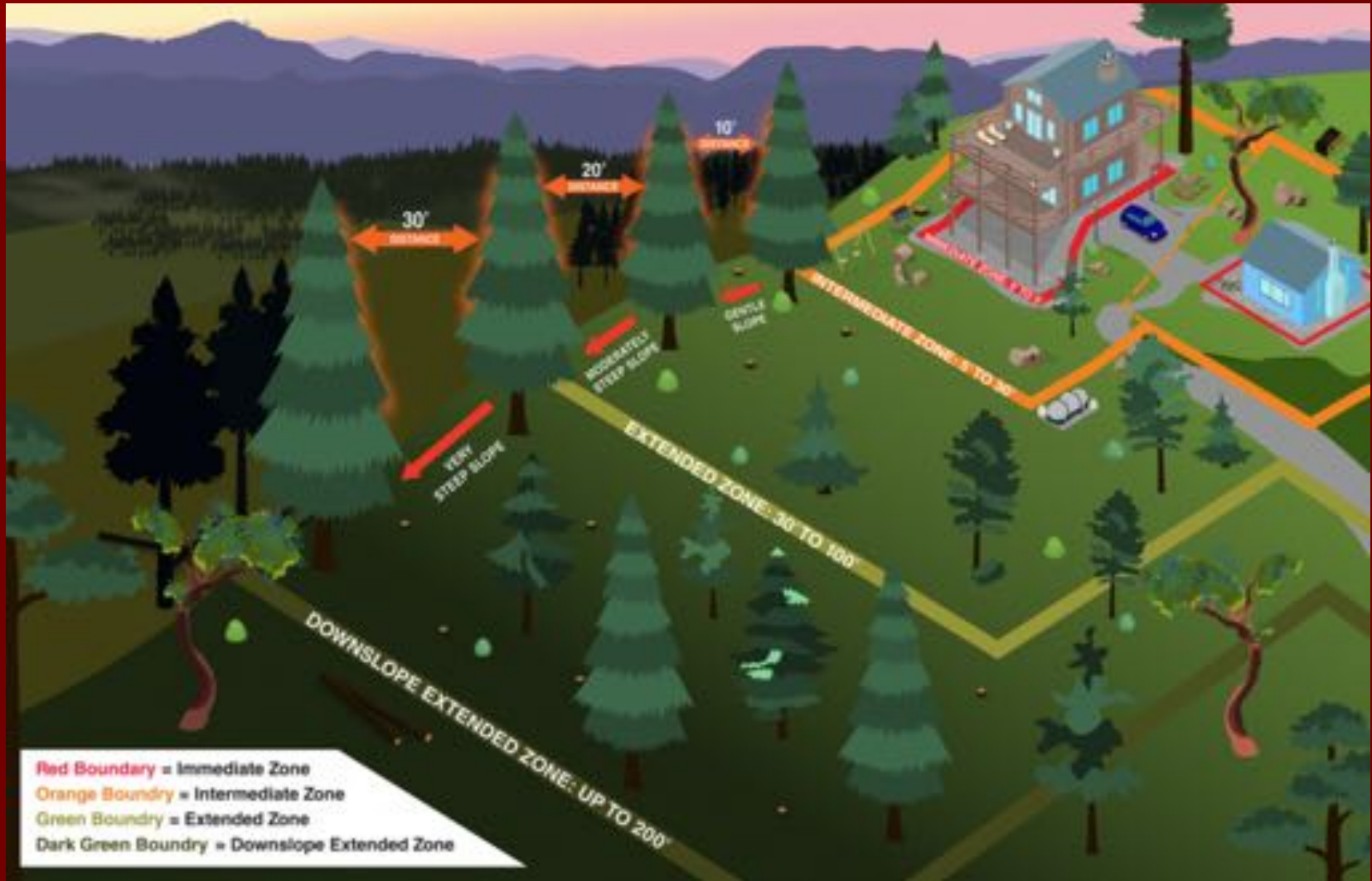


Example: A five foot shrub is growing near a tree.
 $3 \times 5 = 15$ feet of clearance needed between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branch.



Lean, clean and green

3 Extended Zone: 30-100 feet



- Again spacing and hygiene are key

Extended Zone 30'-100'



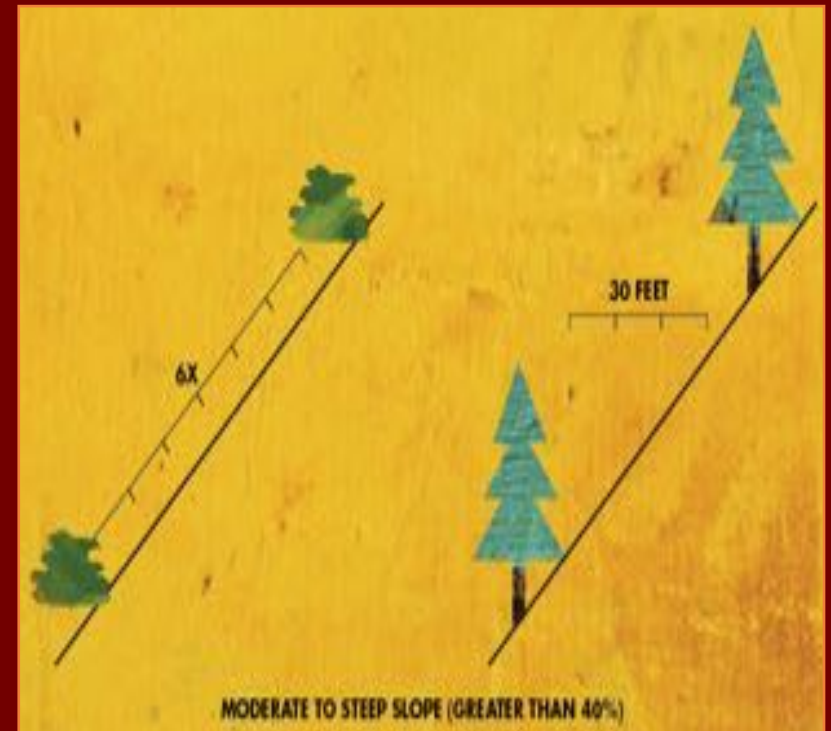
Limb up or "skirt" trees to give space
below the canopy

Slope



- Steeper slope = more space
- Spacing and hygiene are key

Slope



Embers/Firebrands

- Can be carried or blown a mile or more
- Extreme conditions: dry and windy can be 5 miles
- What will it land on
- Will it self extinguish, smolder or ignite?



Home Ignition Zone-Be Ember Aware

Where is this home vulnerable to ember attack?



Where do needle and leaf debris accumulate on your property?



That is where the wind will carry the embers

Embers/Firebrands



- Embers pass through defensible space
- Is where they land ignitable?

Deck and Fence



Roof Vents



Skylights and Chimneys

■ Skylights

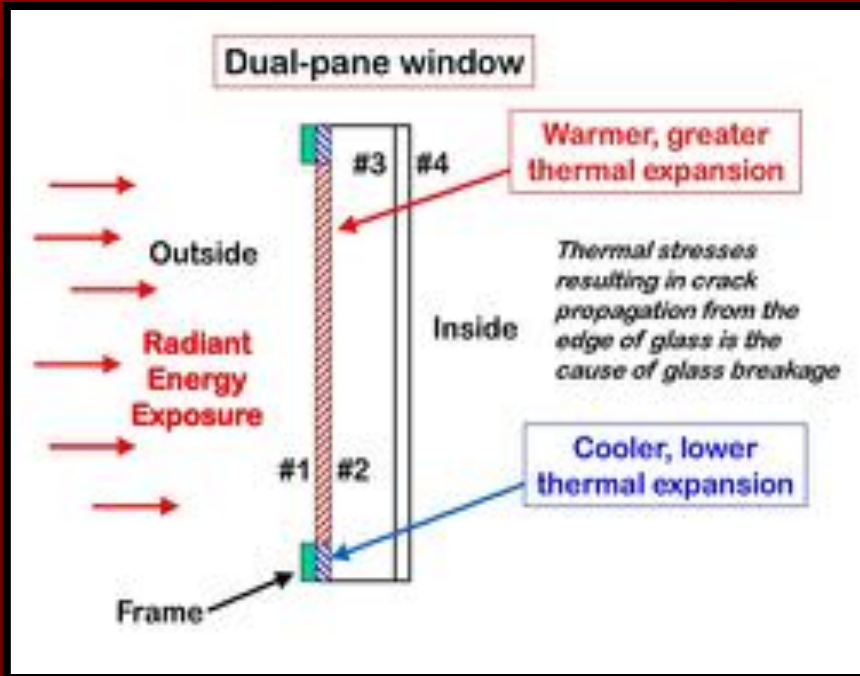
- Remove accumulated debris
- Consider replacing acrylic glass for tempered glass



■ Chimneys

- Cover chimney and stovepipe outlets
- Make sure chimney is at least 10 feet from tree branches

Windows



The outer pane of this dual-pane window broke during a 2007 wildfire. Having the dual-pane window was one reason why this home survived.

Tempered glass in a window will have a marking etched on one of the corners, similar to that shown here.

Shutters



Foundations and Exterior Walls

- Remove combustible materials
- Use closure devices on vents
- Screen wall openings with 1/8th inch metal screen



Notice what's burning?









Question & Answer



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Resources

- <http://www.alertscc.com/>
- <http://www.sccfd.org/>
- www.SCCFireSafe.org
- <http://calfire.ca.gov/>
- Readyforwildfire.org
- <https://www.firesafesantacruz.org>