



Defensible Space and Roadside Clearance

PURPOSE

The reduction and disruption of the horizontal and vertical continuity of vegetation, both live and dead, as part of defensible space and along roads:

- Provides evacuation routes and access for public safety personnel and apparatus
- Reduces how fast a wildfire spreads and ember production
- Reduces a wildfire's duration (time it takes to consume vegetation) and intensity (heat production)
- Reduces a wildfire's potential of spreading from surface vegetation to tree canopy
- Provides fire fighters a location to initiate fire suppression tactics
- Improves fire fighters' ability to suppress spot fires
- Allows aircraft delivered retardant and water to reach the wildfire and adjacent unburned vegetation
- Accomplishes the role of historical natural wildfires

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Consult a forester for forest management
- Remove all vegetation 0-6 feet tall, specifically shrubs, brush, and small trees, to prevent a wildfire from spreading between shrubs and brush (horizontally) and into the tree canopy (vertical). Some vegetation can remain if separated 6-10 feet from other vegetation
- Remove small trees with less than a 6-inch trunk diameter at 4 ½ feet above the ground. Small trees can remain if no overstory trees are present and the spacing between trees is at least 20 feet (end of limb to end of limb)
- Limb up larger/remaining trees so lowest branches are greater than 6 feet above ground level. May need to cut branches at trunk up to 10-12 feet.



IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

- Masticator can be used to mechanical cut and shred/chip. May not be applicable for steep slopes.
- Cut and chip. Chipped material can be cast, piled in place, or hauled away. Chips can help reduce erosion.
- Cut, pile, and burn small piles. Piles can cure and be burned on a cooler, even rainy day. Cover piles or a portion of each pile as necessary.
- Lop and scatter. Allow cut material to decompose in place.

RESOURCES

- Sonoma Resource Conservation District (<https://sonomarc.org/>)
- Audubon Canyon Ranch Fire Forward (<https://www.egret.org/fire-forward>)



Masticator Treatment with Chainsaw Clean-Up



Masticator Treatment



Kincade Fire Burned Through Forest with Thinned Understory



Cut, Pile, and Burn treatment



Cut, Pile, and Burn treatment



Lop and Scatter