

May 2009

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Outdoor Living In A Survivable Space

Spring is here and outside is the place to be. For many homeowners, creating a relaxing, enjoyable space in the backyard is a springtime project. As part of this endeavor the space should also be “survivable.” Whether your home is in an urban or rural setting, the landscape and maintenance recommendations associated with Survivable Space will help make your property more fire resistant.

WHAT IS SURVIVABLE SPACE?

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Survivable Space is a safety zone or fire break around your house. The size of area will depend on the surrounding environment. Some general guidelines are as follows:



-  Flammable (highly resinous) plants, woodpiles, and debris should be kept as far away from the exterior walls of the home as possible.
-  Fences, decks, or outbuildings connected to the house must be considered part of the house; construct them out of non-combustible materials and keep them clear of pine needles, dead leaves, etc.

FIREWISE LANDSCAPING

The NFPA recommends Firewise landscaping to help create Survivable Space. The primary goal of Firewise landscaping is fuel reduction. A 30 foot distance from all your property’s structures should be well irrigated, low density vegetation. The distance between plants should be large enough that a fire engine could get through to all sides of your property to suppress a fire. Keep your yard:

-  **LEAN:** Small amounts of flammable vegetation.
-  **CLEAN:** No accumulation of dead vegetation or other flammable debris.
-  **GREEN:** Plants are kept healthy and green all through the summer.

You can visit a Firewise landscape display with over 200 recommended plants at the Idaho Botanical Garden located at 2355 N. Penitentiary Rd., Boise. The plants are drought tolerant and easy to maintain. If you have a large lot that extends beyond 30 feet in all directions from your property’s structures, you can incorporate more wildland features into your landscape . The plant density and distance recommendations will vary based on the slope of your property. The greater the slope, the greater the distance recommendations will be. For more information on this go to:

<http://www.accem.org/pdf/survivablespace.pdf>

HOME MAINTENANCE/DESIGN

 Make your roof fire safe. Untreated wood shake roofs are the leading cause of wildland fire losses. A roof made of fire-resistant or non-combustible materials can make your home safer. Also, use non-combustible (metal) screening in eave vents and for windows.

 Sweep gutters, roofs, and eaves regularly and remove dead branches from around or near chimneys. Burning firebrands or embers can collect in the same space that leaves and pine needles do. Remove leaves and needles from window wells and from corners and crevices around the outside of your home.

 Keep your added “fuel breaks” like driveways and gravel walkways clear of flammable debris.



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