**WF - 4**

# FEMA Mitigation Funding Opportunity

# Defensible Space

## Overview

A defensible space is an area around a building in which vegetation, debris, and other types of combustible fuels have been treated, cleared, or reduced to slow the spread of fire to and from the building. **See illustration below**. Information about local vegetation, weather, and topography is used to determine the Fire Severity Zone of an area, which can help determine the most effective design of a defensible space. It is one of the most cost-effective ways to protect a building from a wildfire and can often be created by the property owner.

Defensible space projects for residential structures, commercial buildings, public facilities, and infrastructure must be implemented in conformance with local code requirements for defensible space.

A graphic illustrating circular zones are a central point at increasing diameters describing defensible space projects for each zone.  Zone 1: Remove combustible litter on roofs and gutters and trim tree branches that overhang the roof and chimney.  Zone 1: Eliminate all combustible materials within 30 feet of the home. Zone 2: Place woodpiles at least 30 feet from the building and store the wood in vegetation-free zone such as a graveled area. Zone 2: Prune and remove dead and dying branches from individual and well-spaced clumps of trees and shrubs. Zone 3: Reduce fuels by thinning and pruning vegetation horizontally and vertically.

## Eligible Activities

* Replacing flammable vegetation with fire-resistant vegetation by selective removal of flammable species and/or planting and seeding of fire-resistant species.
* Removal of down, dead, or dry vegetation
* Cutting and clearing of shrubs and brush.
* Pruning trees generally up to 15 feet aboveground
* Removing or trimming tree limbs overhanging roof and chimney
* Cleaning all needles and leaves from roofs, eaves, and rain gutters
* Thinning shrubs or trees so crowns do not intersect and there is space between individual shrubs and trees
* Conducting outreach to educate homeowners on defensible space and solicit participation in project inspections by fire officials to confirm that defensible space has been completed adequately

## Overall Complexity

| Application | Environmental | Legal |
| --- | --- | --- |
| High | Medium | Medium |

## Application Requirements:

* Must be a local government, Tribe, or PNP
* Must have a FEMA approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
* Must fulfill appropriate state emergency management agency application requirements including, scope of work, budget, schedule, etc.
* Long-term benefits must outweigh costs (BCR > 1)
* 25% local match required
* Application should include property level detail for activities including address of property, associated defensible space activities, and documentation of homeowner’s voluntary participation
* Projects involving reimbursement payments to homeowners must include details of the reimbursement process
* Application should include means by which activities will take place (i.e., will contractors, homeowners, or local jurisdiction staff complete the work?)
* Funding limits are set by the state emergency management agency
* No construction or project activities allowed prior to FEMA/Cal OES approval

## Environmental Requirements:

Depending on the specific location and methods the applicable environmental and historic preservation (EHP) laws can differ. Given this, engagement with FEMA EHP is required on a project specific basis. FEMA EHP has streamlined consultation tools in place with partner agencies, such as the State Historic Preservation Office and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, that may aid in a faster EHP compliance review and project clearance.

Basic EHP requirements for this project type:

* Location of each structure (address, coordinates)
* Proposed methods for vegetation reduction
* For trees that will be cut or removed, provide the maximum trunk circumference and description of removal method (Will root ball be removed? Will tree be chained/drag dragged?)
* Description of any ground disturbance
* Planned disposal methods for the cut vegetation (Will materials be chipped and broadcast? Hauled to a licensed landfill?)
* Proposed methods to avoid impacts to threatened and endangered plants or animals
* Photographs of the vegetation in the general area