

How does fuels reduction work?

Fuels reduction works in many different ways. The major way is the fuel that fire has to burn in has been reduced so that it cannot become a crown fire (burning through tops of trees) and creating major damage to surrounding vegetation and homes. The biggest cause of a home burning is caused by ember showers, which basically start from a massive fire burning in heavy vegetation around homes. Fuels reduction “normally”* keeps fires on the ground burning the lighter fuel models (grass and shrubs) making fighting these fires less dangerous and more manageable for firefighters and homeowners. Ground fires also burn debris that can accumulate on the ground such as pine duff (needle accumulation on the ground) and dead trees and branches.

How is fuels reduction completed?

Fuels reduction removes vegetation that can cause fire to increase in intensity and create major problems.

1. The process begins with studying the home ignition zone and find what will cause the major problems around the property.
2. Remove the vegetation that can cause issues such as ladder fuels (fuels which create fire to go from the ground to tree tops) which include small/ young trees, juniper, or dead/dying vegetation.
3. Space trees out so there is adequate space between the crowns (10-15 foot crown spaces).
4. Remove overhanging branches or branches touching the roof to a distance of at least 10 feet, and remove all branches around chimney.
5. Prune the branches off of large trees to a minimum of 8 feet up the base of a tree.
6. When you complete these steps you will have a healthy stand of trees that don't compete for all the water and nutrients in the ground; which competition creates sick and unhealthy trees and stands that are very susceptible to the pine beetle.
7. Remove firewood off decks/porches and to a safe place (recommendations are 30 feet away from home in an area where fire won't hit hard),
8. Screen decks so vegetation can't get under decks causing spot fires,
9. Keep grass cut, and make a small buffer (recommendation of >3 feet) around the foundation using nonflammable items to prevent direct contact of flames on home (small rocks work great).

10. Keep roof and rain gutters clean of flammable materials.
11. Be aware of stored flammable items around homes (fuel and propane tanks, fuel canisters, hazardous materials, and plastic items).
12. Make sure the eaves of your roof are sealed with less than 1/8 inch soffit vent holes so embers can't enter the structure through the eaves and ignite an unseen fire in your home.
13. Make sure plants around the home are fire resistant plants.
14. When building a new home use ignition resistant materials such as metal roofs, building materials and do not build on steep slopes.

Cost assistance and are there people available to assist with these projects?

There may or may not be grants available to assist you in the cost of fuels reduction projects. Currently there is a 75/25 cost share program where the homeowner pays 25% of the total cost and grants pay the remaining 75%. But, these grants could become unavailable at any time! The fire department also employs seasonal employees to do fuels projects around homes and properties every summer. They can also assist the homeowner while he/she works on the projects. The employees do saw work, slash piling, chipping (if available), slash pile burning, and the fire department can assist the homeowner with suggestions on what to do while they work on the project.