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AFTER

Reducing Risk Around Your Home

Tesuque Valley Community Association Firewise Project

The first step is to take an honest, unemotional look at your property.

Take a hard look at your home, and your property. Imagine a fire starting near you and look at the vegetation on your property as fuel for that fire. Does it lead right up to your house? Are there any breaks in the fuels that could slow a fire down? The idea is to break up the fuels both vertically and horizontally so that fire does not have a direct path to your house, and to reduce the heat and intensity generated by the fire near your home.

FIND YOUR PROPERTY BOUNDARY

Accidentally mitigating on your neighbor's property can cause a great deal of grief for both of you. Make sure you know exactly where your property lines are and stay within them.

TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS

Let them know what you are planning, and see if they'd be interested in doing some work on their property too. Help each other out!



ZONE 1 - 0-30 feet

Most of your work will be here. The first 3-5 feet should be basically free of flammable material. Fire resistant plants in isolated clusters are fine here, just keep them away from windows and vents, and regularly rake up dead leaves and debris. If wooden or coyote fences are attached to the structure, consider replacing at least the last 3 feet that connect to the home with non-flammable material (metal, adobe, stone).

Inside the 30 feet perimeter there can be trees, but they need to have plenty of space around them. If they are tall, remove shorter vegetation from underneath them. Keep grasses short and watered.

ZONE 2 - 30-100 feet

This zone is a more moderate thin, but some of the same rules apply: get the little stuff out from under the big stuff, and give larger trees some space around them. If your property slopes downhill, give more space between trees (think about fire running uphill).

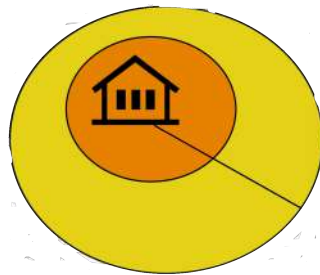
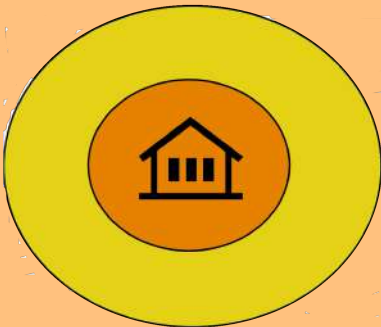
ZONE 3 - 100+ feet

This zone and beyond can be managed more for forest health than mitigation by removing diseased and weak trees, younger trees among thick areas that won't have enough room to grow and creating gaps here and there to open the canopy to allow light and water to hit the forest floor.



STEP 2 Zone Out!

Start at your house and divide the property into circular zones with your home being the center point.



On steeper sloped properties, move your zones so that the majority of the area is heading downslope from the home.

STEP 3

DO IT!

A lot of your Zone I work you can do yourself with simple and inexpensive hand tools.

Never walk around your property empty-handed.

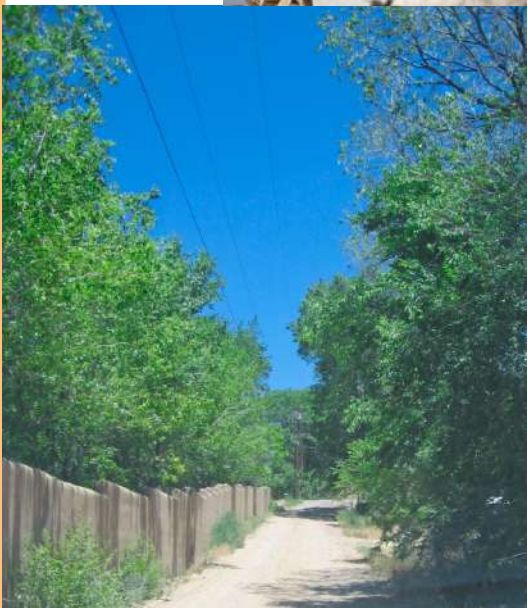
Carry a pruning saw with you and take off dead, or ground hugging branches. Small trees or bushes under those large trees and low, dead limbs are easy to take care of with just a small hand saw.

Rake leaf and needle debris away from your home, paying special attention to corners and under decks. Where this stuff accumulates being blown by the wind, will be where embers can accumulate and ignite as well.

Keep any remaining vegetation within 30 feet of your home well watered, and any grasses mowed.

Patios and decks should be swept of leaf and needle debris regularly, as should driveways, especially at the garage door.

Woodpiles need to be moved at least 30 feet (and preferably) uphill of your home.



WHICH TREES GO?

Some obvious signs of trees that are infected with bugs or parasites can be spotted easily while walking your property. These include needlescale and mistletoe in pinons.

Needle scale on pinon



Plan to begin thinning in early to late fall (best once there are freezing temperatures at night). Then look for:

- Trees that are sickly, or struggling
- Trees that have growth on one side only
- Small diameter, leaning trees
- Trees that are crowding old, large trees
- Crowded clumps of trees

If you do this yourself, take it slow, starting from your home and work outward. If hiring a contractor, walk the property and mark trees with them to get a good idea of what will be left. **MAKE SURE TO KNOW WHERE PROPERTY LINES ARE AND MARK THEM CLEARLY.**



Dwarf mistletoe on pinon



Ips beetle tracks on pinon





All the work you do around your home will help with keeping fire from consuming it, but you need to look at the structure itself as well. Roofs (whether flat or peaked) can accumulate debris which is easily ignitable. Check your roof for any of this debris pre-fire season.

Vents should be cleaned of any debris and clear of any vegetation near them. If they are not already screened, use 1/8" metal construction screen to cover them.

Windows should be kept free of any vegetation near them. Look for gaps around the sill and fill them



HARDEN YOUR HOME

Don't forget to look for the vulnerabilities of your home - roof, windows and vents - for places that embers could enter or accumulate and ignite.



WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THAT SLASH?

Slash can be one of the biggest impediments to doing mitigation anywhere. If too much is left on site it can actually create more of a hazard, yet used wisely it can help with erosion and soil amendment in particular environments.

Slash after one year on site



Contacting a land management professional or agency to determine where and how slash can be utilized on your property is the best way to go. They can determine where it would be beneficial for soils and erosion control, or if best to completely remove it.

The options for slash include:

- Chipping
- Lop and scatter
- Erosion control
- Pile burning
- Hauling away

All of which will affect the level of work involved and potentially the cost.



BEFORE



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