

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Amador-El Dorado Unit

CONTACT: Teri Mizuhara, Fire Prevention Specialist II, 530.708.2724
RELEASE DATE: March 5, 2013

Creating Defensible Space

Camino – The time is now to begin working on clearing defensible space around your home. Living in the Sierra's comes with a responsibility that many urban/suburban dwellers do not face, from the lower foothills covered in annual grasses that can reach several feet in height, to oak woodlands and on to forests of timber reaching 7000 feet in elevation; the Amador-El Dorado Unit of CAL FIRE covers it all. From Rancho Murrietta in Sacramento County to Markleeville in Alpine County, north to Georgetown in El Dorado County and south to Jackson in Amador County, the geography changes dramatically across this spectrum. The common thread to all of these areas *and everything in between* is wildfire. "Fire is a natural part of our ecosystem which helps clear out the weeds and brush (understory) and creates a healthier forest dynamic. Naturally occurring fire has not been allowed to do what it did hundreds of years ago because fire agencies must suppress fires to protect lives and property. It is now vital that people do their part and create a defensible space around their homes. **Defensible Space Works!** Creating a buffer zone between your home and the wildland greatly reduces the risk of your home catching on fire from radiant heat or flying embers. These embers can destroy homes, and even entire neighborhoods, that are far from the actual flame front of a wildfire" shares CAL FIRE's Amador-El Dorado Unit Chief Kelly Keenan.

Keys to creating defensible space are:

Zone One extends up to 30 feet (or your property line whichever is closer) from every structure on your property

- Remove all dead and dying vegetation
- Remove leaf litter from your roof and rain gutters
- Relocate woodpiles well away from your home a minimum of 30 feet
- Trim trees so that they are a minimum of ten feet away from your chimney and roof line
- Remove "ladder fuels" (low-level vegetation that could allow fire to spread from the ground to shrubs and bushes to the tree canopies).

Zone Two extends from 30 feet to 100 feet (or to your property line whichever is closer)

- The key is to keep plant material separated from each other, both horizontally and vertically. This prevents the vegetation from acting like a ladder and allowing the fire to move from the ground to the tree canopies
- Cut annual grasses down to a maximum of four inches in height

"Begin today while the weather is cooler. Start out around your home and work your way out to the 100 foot perimeter or to your property line, whichever is closer. It may take a few years to achieve the 100 foot clearance around your home and other structures (garages, barns, tool sheds, well houses, etc.) but each foot of defensible space you create will make your home that much safer" says Chief Keenan. Chief Keenan adds "due to the current lack of rain and snow, we are facing a drought year and an early start to fire season, so prepare your defensible space now".

For more detailed information on what you have read, please visit CAL FIRE's "Read-Set-Go" website at www.ReadyForWildfire.org or call 530-644-2345 to receive a free brochure.