## Questions & Answers

### *What are forestland-urban interface lands?*

They include lands that are within an ODF protection district, and which have been divided into lots for residential development. These are also lands where wildfires are likely to occur.

A forestland-urban interface area is composed of groups of homes. The minimum grouping is four homes per 40 acres.

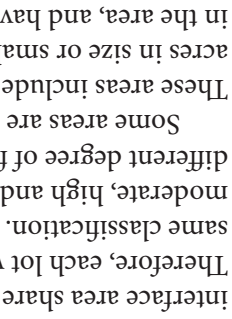
### *What is a fire-risk classification?*

A classification is the product of several factors that influence an area's vulnerability to wildfire:

- wildfire and climate history
- dominant topographical character
- dominant natural vegetation type

Residential lots within a forestland-urban interface area share the same level of wildfire risk. Therefore, each lot within an area is assigned the same classification. The classifications levels are low, moderate, high and extreme. Each level requires a different degree of fuel reduction.

Some areas are classified high-density extreme. These areas include lots that are generally three acres in size or smaller, have many undeveloped lots in the area, and have few escape routes.



The Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act requires the owners of forestland-urban interface lands to reduce potentially flammable vegetation around homes and along driveways. It also requires the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to assist landowners with accomplishing their fuel reduction obligations.

*Fuel reduction around a home can keep a wildfire emergency from becoming a disaster.*

structures, along the driveway, and along roadsides and property lines. Roadside and property line fuel breaks are required even if a home or other structure isn't present. (See the reverse side of this brochure for details.)

### *What is fuel?*

Fuel is anything that can burn. Needles, leaves, dry grass, dead branches and firewood are common fuels in these areas. A home roofed with cedar shakes is particularly vulnerable to wildfire damage or destruction because of the highly combustible nature of cedar.

Fuel reduction means to lessen the amount of fuel available to a fire, to increase the distance between fuels, and to isolate fuels so fire can't get to them.

### *Who identifies and classifies these areas?*

Each Oregon county convenes a forestland-urban interface classification committee. The committee is composed of three county-appointed members, one appointed by the state fire marshal and one by the state forester. The committee conducts its identification and classification tasks in five-year cycles.

### *What is a property owner required to do?*

In most cases, the owner of a lot in a forestland-urban interface area classified high density extreme must create a fuel break around the home and other

### *Is it necessary to cut down a lot of trees?*

In many cases, no. Trees can protect a home from a wildfire's radiant heat and airborne embers. It may be necessary to thin some trees to reduce the volume of fuel on a property, but it is generally wise to leave the oldest trees, if they are healthy. Before removing healthy, mature trees, consult with an ODF fire prevention specialist.

### *Does ODF have to inspect the property?*

No. The property owner may sign and return the certification form without an inspection. However, ODF employees are available to provide advice about how to meet the act's fuel-reduction standards.

## The Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act *(sometimes called SB 360)* and YOU

In 1997, the Oregon Legislature passed the Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act in response to the escalating problems of wildfires burning homes, firefighters risking their lives in conflagrations, and the rising cost of fire suppression.

The act takes important steps toward an effective protection system by:

- identifying areas where residential development has occurred in wildfire-prone areas
- classifying fire risk in those areas
- establishing fuel-reduction measures for each fire-risk classification area so fire intensity around homes will be significantly reduced

Following the fuel-reduction guidelines described in this brochure will increase your property's margin of protection, and will make the property compliant with the act.

Once fuel-reduction is complete on your property, you are encouraged to return a certification form — which is mailed by the Oregon Department of Forestry to the owners of properties included in forestland-urban interface areas. This certification form will protect you against fire-cost recovery penalties, should a wildfire occur on your property.

There is no fine for not complying with the fuel-reduction requirements of the act, but a property owner may be billed for certain fire suppression costs if:

- a certification form is not received by ODF prior to the start of a fire
- a fire of any origin starts on the property
- the fire spreads through the parts of the property where fuel-reduction should have been done
- the fire escapes initial attack and the state pays suppression costs above what is normally budgeted for initial-attack costs

This liability is capped at $100,000.

The purpose of a fuel break is to keep an approaching wildfire from reaching your house and other structures. Fire ignites easily and moves rapidly in dry grass, dry needles and leaves, dead branches on trees and shrubs, and piles of firewood and lumber. Reducing the number and arrangement of these flammable materials within fuel break areas will make your structures more defendable against wildfire.

**For more information**

**Contact your local**

**Oregon Department of Forestry or Forest Protective Association office**

**www.oregon.gov/odf/offices.shtml**

**Oregon Department of Forestry**
**Protection From Fire Program**
**2600 State Street**
**Salem, OR 97310**

# 7 Steps to Wildfire Protection

**For forestland-urban interface areas classified "High Density Extreme"**

**Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act**

ODF-SB360-D-0410

# 7 Steps
## to Wildfire Protection

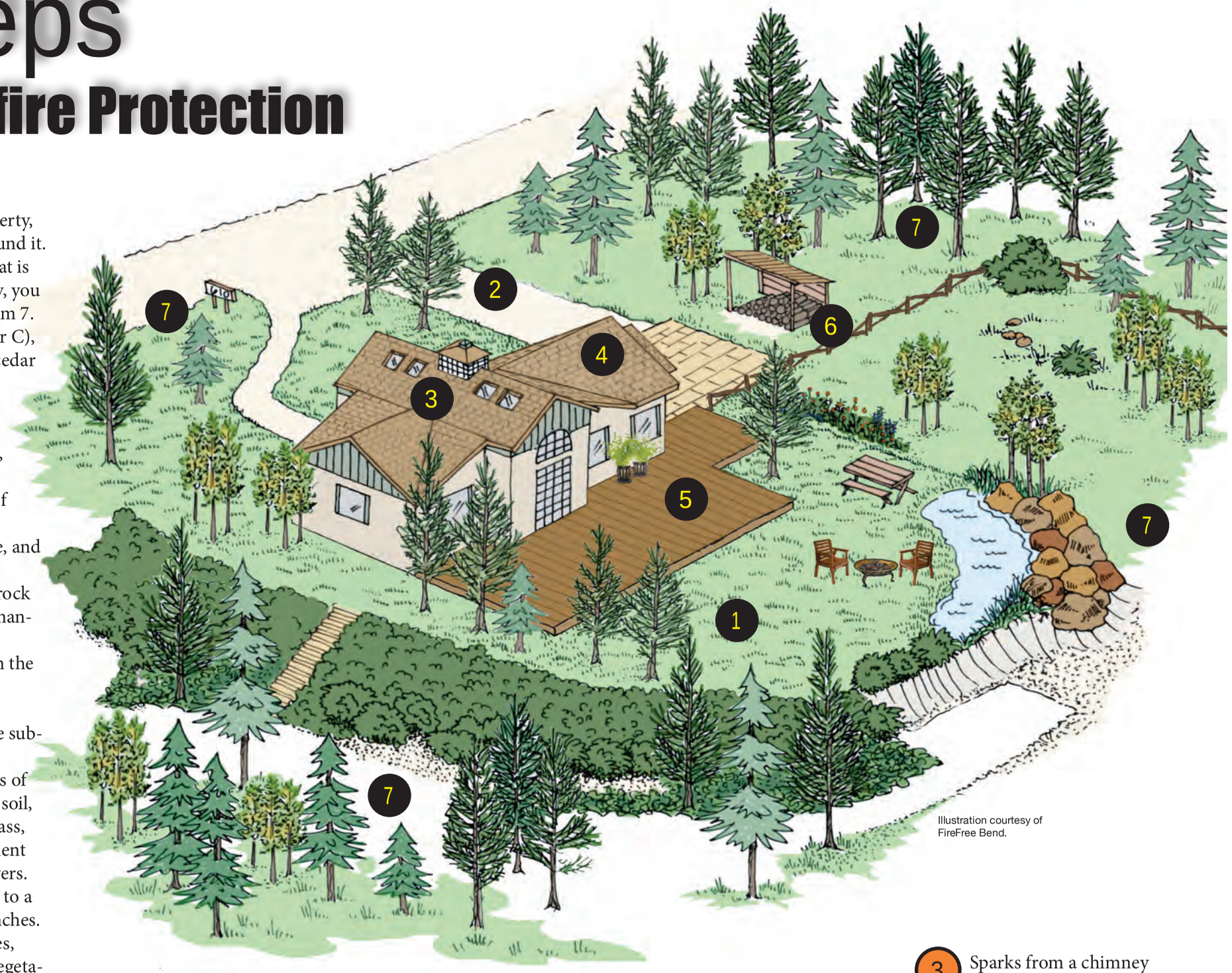



Illustration courtesy of FireFree Bend.

**1** If there is a home or other structure on your property, then a fuel break is required to be established around it. A structure is defined as a permanently sited building that is at least 500 square feet. If no home exists on the property, you are only required to create a perimeter fuel break. See item 7.

If the home has flame-resistant roofing (Class A, B or C), then a 50-foot fuel break is required. If it is roofed with cedar shakes or other flammable material, the fuel break must be 100 feet in size.

A fuel break begins at the outside edge of a home's furthest extension. This may be the edge of the roof eave, or the outside edge of a deck attached to the home. The shape of the fuel break mirrors the footprint shape of the home and anything that is attached to it.

A fuel break's distances are measured along the slope, and does not need to extend beyond the property line.

The fuel break may use natural firebreaks, such as a rock outcropping or a body of water, or it can be completely man-made.

The vegetation within the fuel break must meet the following guidelines:

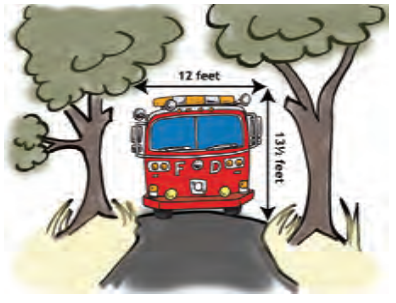
- Ground cover should be substantially non-flammable or fire-resistant. Examples of this include asphalt, bare soil, clover, concrete, green grass, ivy, mulches, rock, succulent ground cover or wildflowers.
- Dry grass should be cut to a height of less than four inches.
- Cut grass, leaves, needles, twigs and similar small vegetative debris should be broken up so that a continuous fuel bed is not created.
- Shrubs and trees should be maintained in a green condition, be substantially free of dead plant material, and have any potential "ladder fuels" removed.
- Trees and shrubs should also be arranged so that fire cannot spread or jump from plant to plant. Some thinning may be necessary to accomplish this.

**2** On a driveway that is at least 150 feet long, it is necessary to remove obstructions over the driving surface, and create a fuel break along the driveway's fringe.

The clearance above the driving area must meet these specifications:

- the horizontal clearance must be at least 12 feet
- the vertical clearance must be at least 13 ½ feet

The fuel break along the driveway fringe must extend 10 feet from each side of the driveway's centerline, creating a total fuel break area that is at least 20 feet wide, including the driving surface.




The vegetation must be modified to the same standards as a fuel break around a structure. Likewise, the driveway fuel break's distance is measured along the slope, and does not need to extend beyond the property line.

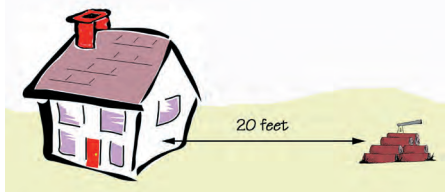
**3** Sparks from a chimney connected to a fireplace or wood-burning stove could catch tree branches on fire. To reduce the chance of this happening, trim all branches ten feet away from a chimney that vents a wood-burning fireplace or stove.

**4** All dead branches overhanging any portion of the roof must be removed. Also remove accumulations of leaves, needles, twigs, bark and other potentially flammable debris that may be on the roofing surface, in the valleys or in the rain gutters.

**5** Keeping the space under wooden decks and exterior stairways clean — and enclosed — is one of the best ways to keep a house safe during fire season. Firewood and lumber need to be removed, and dry needles, leaves and other litter need to be cleaned out, too.

**6** Firewood and lumber piles near a structure can become a source of intense, sustained heat if they should catch fire. This could ignite nearby vegetation, or cause windows to break, admitting fire into the structure.

During the months of fire season, move firewood and lumber piles at least 20 feet from any structure. A better solution is to put firewood and lumber into an enclosed shed.




**7** Properties located in an area classified "High-Density Extreme" must have fuel breaks along all property lines and roadsides, regardless of whether a structure is on the property or not. A roadside fuel break:

- begins at the edge of any road that is adjacent to or runs through the property
- extends for a distance of at least 20 feet from the roadside, or to the property line, whichever is shortest

A property line fuel break:

- begins at the boundary with an adjacent property
- extends for at least 20 feet from the boundary, or to another property line, whichever is shortest

The distances for both the roadside fuel break and property line fuel breaks are measured along the slope.

In general, these fuel breaks shall have the same characteristics as a fuel break around a structure.