

CHIPPING PROGRAMS



The Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) Community Chipping Programs incentivize the creation of defensible space around homes in high wildfire risk areas. When funding is available, we offer two options for Santa Cruz County residents located in eligible geographic regions. In Spring, we offer at-home chipping services to landowners who clear 100 feet of defensible space around their homes and private roads, as recommended by CalFire, to improve fire safety. There is a limit of three piles per property (or household if there is more than one per property) measuring no larger than 8' W x 4' H x 10' L (deep) each. In the Fall we have a reimbursement option for some chipping expenses incurred in neighborhoods with eight or more households participating who hire a licensed contractor. Signups for both programs are first come, first served and limited based on funding availability. For more information please visit <https://www.rcdsantacruz.org/chipping-programs>

While clearing is necessary for creating defensible space, please be aware that new hazards can arise if measures are not taken to protect bare soil and slopes from erosion. Please practice responsible clearing. In most cases, cutting down mature trees requires a County or CALFIRE permit and is usually not necessary to create good defensible space. Limbing up trees so lower branches aren't touching shrubs or your structures does the trick.

Also be conscious of high voltage power lines on or near your property. Don't risk electrocution! PG&E's qualified tree contractors may be able to prune or cut down trees near high voltage lines. You can request a visit from a PG&E forester by calling 800-743-5000. **Cal/OSHA requires certified line clearance tree workers to perform any tree work within 10' of high voltage power lines.** Be fire safe when using motorized equipment to clear defensible space. Work early during the day with lower temperatures and higher humidity. All motorized equipment should have spark arrestors.

Nesting Birds. Visually inspect the tree, branch or shrub for signs of nests or nesting activity before cutting.

- Sit quietly and watch for birds that may be bringing nest material or food repeatedly to one place. Birds tend to place their nests just on the undersides of the tree canopy and where branches join together.
- Look on the ground for concentrations of white-colored droppings and/or accumulations of nesting material, then check the vegetation above.
- As you walk through an area, look for birds flying out of vegetation close to you and intensely scolding you; they may have a nest nearby.
- If you find a nest, do not do any cutting within at least 50' of the nest until the chick has fledged.
- Do not attempt to move or disturb the nest.
- **It is unlawful to needlessly destroy the nest of any nesting bird – CDFW Code 3503.**

CREATING DEFENSIBLE SPACE AND PREPARING YOUR PILES

For assistance with appropriate clearing, residents are encouraged to contact the RCD, your local Fire Safe Council or Fire Department PRIOR to clearing. For a list of local fire department visit:

www.firesafesantacruz.org/santa-cruz-county-fire-protection-districts

Please review the checklist below PRIOR to beginning your project. Piles that do not meet these guidelines will NOT be chipped.

CHECK LIST

Create defensible space! www.firesafesantacruz.org/defensible-space

From your house:

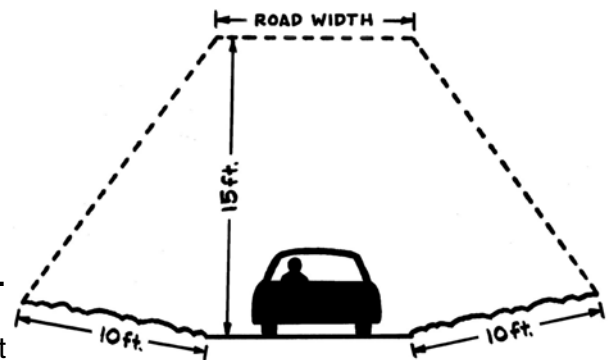
- 5 foot non-combustion zone
- 30 foot clean & green zone
- 100 foot reduced fuel zone
- Clear 10 feet around chimneys and remove limbs overhanging your roof

From your road and driveway:

- Reduce fuels 15' above the width of the road and 10' on either side of your private road.
- 5 foot non-combustion zone

Pile locations **MUST** be accessible to a large box truck and chipper trailer. Extremely narrow or steep driveway may not be serviceable.

Piles must be located within **5 feet of chipper access location**. Chipper access must be along an established road in drivable condition by a truck and trailer. Unpaved roads can not be wet at time of chipping service.



Piles must be **hand stacked**. Limbs should be less than 8" in diameter. Limit side branches to less than 4'.

Piles may **not be larger than 8' wide by 4' high by 10' deep** (longer branches are easier to chip).

Cut ends must face the same direction and point out toward the chipper location. Cut limb end should be on the uphill side of any sloped roads.

No timber harvest debris, or vineyard and orchard waste.

No poison oak, ivy or blackberry vines. No broom or acacia with seed pods, or other invasive materials.

No piles of leaves, pine needles or yard clippings. Only woody brush/branches.

No non-compostable materials (painted or preserved lumber, trash, metal wire, etc.)

No palm fronds, roots, stumps, rocks or mud.

Chips will be blown back onto your property. Place piles in an area where you want the chips.

Make sure your **street address is visible** and that piles are clearly marked with your street number.

Loose dogs may prevent chipping. Inform us if you have dogs.

NO LOCKED GATES. If you have a gate, you **MUST** provide a gate combination or hide-a-key information on your application. Piles must be easily accessible.

Data needed for online chipping schedule form.

Number of piles (3 max)? _____

Total estimated cubic feet of all piles combined (L_____ W_____ H_____)

Total time (or dollars) spent clearing and preparing piles including date range? _____

A minimum of one representative before and after photo of clearing (preferred) taken from the same location (preferred) or a photo of your piles.



RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY