

# Clearing and Preparing Material for Chipping

This Resource Conservation District offers chipping services to landowners who work to clear defensible space around their homes and private roads to improve fire safety. Applicants will be informed if they are eligible for funding and services will be provided based on priority areas and number of residents participating in clearing.

For assistance with determining appropriate clearing, residents are encouraged to contact your local Fire Safe Council or Fire Department PRIOR to clearing. [www.firesafesantacruz.org/santa-cruz-county-fire-protection-districts](http://www.firesafesantacruz.org/santa-cruz-county-fire-protection-districts)

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 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 feet 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.**

## ----- CHECK LIST -----

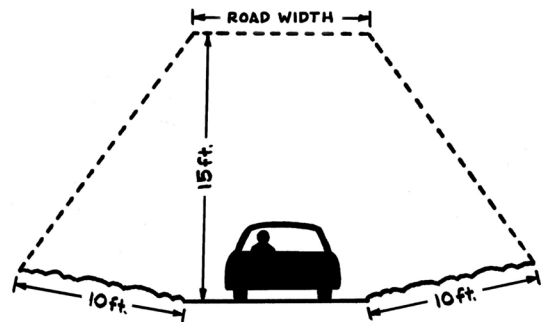
- Create defensible space! [www.firesafesantacruz.org/defensible-space](http://www.firesafesantacruz.org/defensible-space)

### From your house:

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

### From your road and driveway:

- o Reduce fuels 15' above the width of the road and 10' on either side of your private road.
- o Clear 15' over and 10' wide on each side of your driveway.



- 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 the chipper accessibility/location** and **less than 4 feet in height**.
- Piles must be hand stacked. **Limbs must be less than 7 inches in diameter and no more than 6 feet long.** Please **limit side branches to less than 4 feet**.
- Cut ends must face the same direction and point out toward the chipper location
- 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 the chips can be blown.
- Make sure your **street address is posted on the road**.
- Loose dogs may prevent chipping.** Inform us if you have dogs.