

From: [Oliver Orjiako](#)
To: [Sonja Wiser](#)
Subject: FW: Fire safe zones and Clark County regulations
Date: Monday, September 11, 2023 9:46:14 AM

Hi Sonja:

Just for the record. Thanks.

From: Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <cccuinc@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 5:06 PM
To: Karen Bowerman <Karen.Bowerman@clark.wa.gov>; Gary Medvigy <Gary.Medvigy@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <Jose.Alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>
Subject: Fire safe zones and Clark County regulations

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Clark County Council
2023
P.O. Box 5000
Vancouver, Washington 98666

September 8.

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

Re: Fire Safe Zones and Clark County Regulations

Dear Councilors,

Clark County Community Development, Environmental Services and Code Enforcement need to understand they can't put the landowner or homeowner's life at risk because they want to "save the trees". When it comes to fire, safety always comes first, and that should be the focus of these county departments, when it comes to all land use regulations. Environmentalism should not come first.

Clark County Citizens United, Inc. is unfortunately very familiar with landowners whose life, limb and property were threatened by county regulations and regulators who did not put the most important thing first, safety. One landowner was punished by code enforcement because they removed dead and dying cedar. Another landowner was forced to plant 30 oak trees before they could get their building permit, which took eight months. The county said they removed oak, but those oaks were commercially harvested, along with fir, many decades ago, using a DNR Harvest Permit. The stumps were left there for wildlife habitat. This was long before Clark County had any regulations regarding Oak. These folks were held hostage. If the Oaks had been standing, it would have been very dangerous for them. Most Oaks get diseased by that time, and just fall over. But county agents look on a map and claim "Oak", regardless whether they are healthy or a hazard. This regulatory policing is counterproductive. Oaks can be harvested for firewood and commercial sale. If the county wants folks to preserve Oak, they can't force the landowner to harvest them because of fear of retaliation.

After the passage of **E2SSB 5126.SL**, counties are legally obligated to change their policies and code to reflect this law. Particularly, changes must be made to the **Wetland and Habitat** Ordinance to provide fire safe zones while assuring safety, first. Code Enforcement must also take responsibility for decisions they make that create a fire safety hazard to the public. No longer can Environmental Services and Code Enforcement require a landowner to mitigate hundreds of tree plantings directly adjacent to buildings. They can no longer require plantings of trees beyond what was removed. They can no longer require plantings that are highly flammable. They must consider the height, width and spacing of every tree or plant they require the landowner to plant. They must mitigate only outside the fire safe zones.

Thousands of landowners have been punished because of regulation of the Oak tree, and this practice must stop. Fire does not differentiate vegetation. Diseased, dying and dead trees burn first. Large areas of dry Oak leaves burn first. Layers of dead Oak limbs burn first. A burning Oak is a hardwood and stops burning, last. All of this must be considered when ensuring no life will be lost, because of overly environmental county regulation. Clark County must do better at protecting the people from fire and destruction.

Sincerely,

Carol Levanen, Exec. Secretary

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.
P.O. Box 2188
Battle Ground, Washington 98604

E2SSB 5126.SL

27 (5) *The legislature further finds that wildfires have become one of the largest sources of black carbon in the last five years. From 2014 through 2018, wildfires in Washington state generated 39,200,000 metric tons of carbon, the equivalent of more than 8,500,000 cars on 31 the road a year. In 2015, when 1,130,000 acres burned in Washington, 32 wildfires were the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions releasing 17,975,112 metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Wildfire pollution affects all Washingtonians, but has disproportionate health effects on low-income communities, 36 communities of color, and the most vulnerable of our population. Restoring the health of our forests and investing in wildfire prevention and preparedness will therefore contribute to improved air quality and improved public health outcomes.*

p. 2 E2SSB 5126.SL

Washington Firewise USA®

DNR works with local fire districts, [conservation districts](#), counties, and [WSU Extension](#) programs to help Washington residents benefit from the [Firewise USA®](#). Administered through the National Fire Protection Association, the Firewise USA® program encourages homeowners and communities to prepare for wildfire.

From Wikipedia, the free [Garry Oak](#), [Oregon white oak](#) or [Oregon oak](#)

Quercus garryana is an [oak](#) tree species of the [Pacific Northwest](#), with a range stretching from southern [California](#) to southwestern [British Columbia](#).^[3] It is commonly known as the Garry Oak, Oregon white oak or Oregon oak. Older specimens are often affected by [heart rot](#).^[5] In trees, heart rot is a [fungal](#) disease that causes the [decay of wood](#) at the center of the [trunk](#) and [branches](#). Fungi enter the tree through wounds in the bark and decay the [heartwood](#). The diseased heartwood softens, [making trees structurally weaker and prone to breakage](#). Heart rot is a major factor in the economics of [logging](#) and the natural growth dynamic of many older forests. Heart rot is prevalent throughout the world [affecting all hardwood trees](#) and can be very difficult to prevent. A good indication of heart rot is the presence of [mushrooms](#) or fungus [conks](#) on the tree.

The fungi only target the nonliving wood tissue of the heartwood and do not affect the living [sapwood](#). Initially, infected heartwood is discolored but not structurally compromised. As the fungi grow they decay more wood and the tissue becomes [increasingly soft and weak](#). The tree can still grow around the decayed heartwood because the live wood tissue is not affected. [The growth around decayed areas of heartwood creates structural weaknesses in the tree. Trees with extensive decay are more susceptible to broken branches and trunks](#)

Heart rot causes huge profit loss in the [logging](#) industry every year due to damaged and decayed [timber](#). It is estimated that about one third of annual timber (20 billion board feet) harvest is lost due to some form of rot. [Extensive rot causes these trees to be more susceptible to high winds and trunk fracture.](#)

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Preparing homes for wildfire

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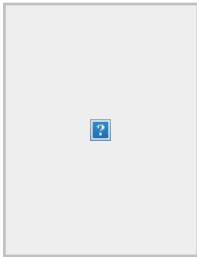
What are the primary threats to homes during a wildfire?

Research around home destruction vs. home survival in wildfires point to embers and small flames as the main way that the majority of homes ignite in wildfires. Embers are burning pieces of airborne wood and/or vegetation that can be carried more than a mile through the wind can cause spot fires and ignite homes, debris and other objects.

There are methods for homeowners to prepare their homes to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. Experiments, models and post-fire studies have shown homes ignite due to the condition of the home and everything around it, up to 200' from the foundation. This is called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ).

Learn more about how wildfires spread and ignite home in our online course [Understanding the Wildfire Threat to Homes. An overview of fire history, fire basics, and how homes burn.](#)

Get informed



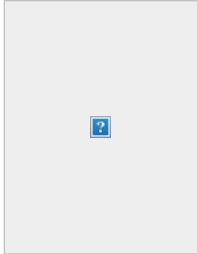
What is the Home Ignition Zone?

The concept of the home ignition zone was developed by retired USDA Forest Service fire scientist Jack Cohen in the late 1990s, following some breakthrough experimental research into how homes ignite due to the effects of radiant heat. The HIZ is divided into three zones.

How to prepare your home for wildfire

Get some wildfire risk reduction steps that can make your home safer during a wildfire.

[Download the fact sheet.](#)

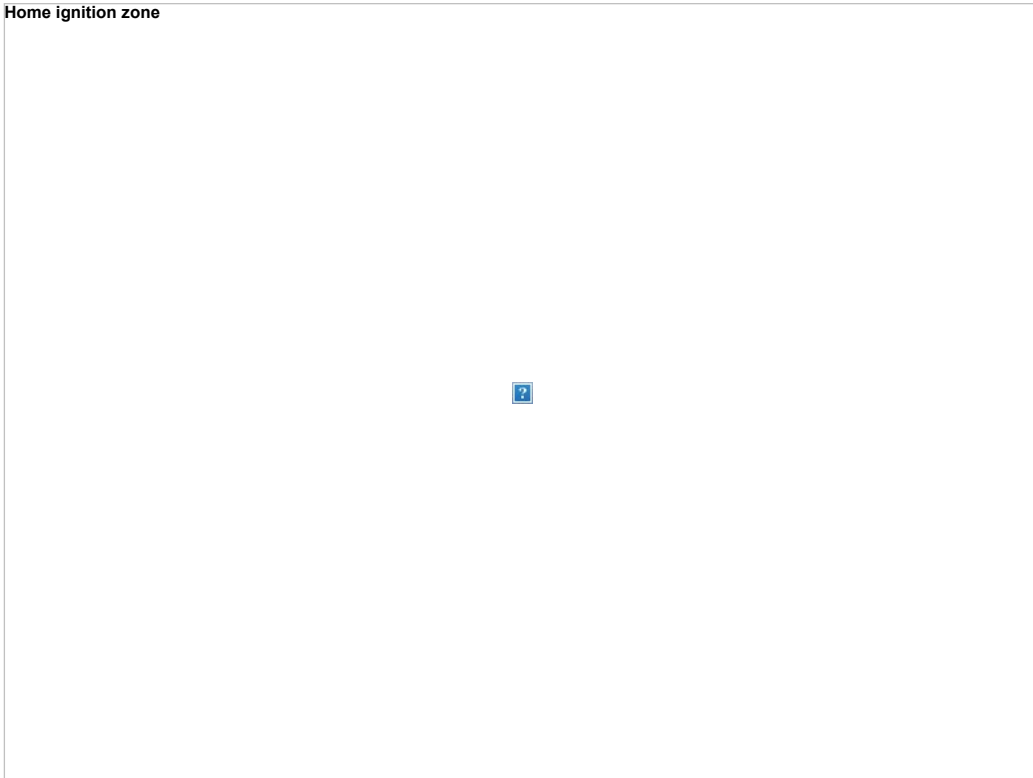


Como preparar su casa contra incendios forestales

This fact sheet is also available in Spanish.

[Download the fact sheet.](#)

Home ignition zone



Immediate zone

The home and the area 0-5' from the furthest attached exterior point of the home; defined as a non-combustible area. Science tells us this is the most important zone to take immediate action on as it is the most vulnerable to embers. **START WITH THE HOUSE ITSELF** then move into the landscaping section of the Immediate Zone.

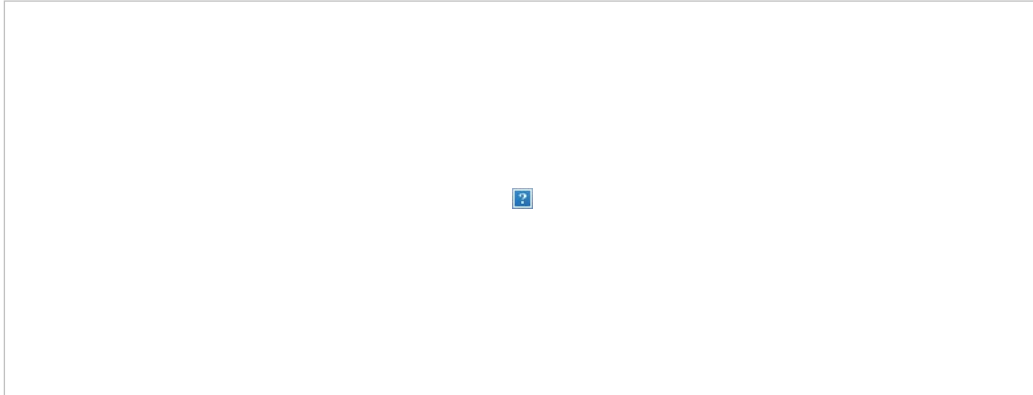
- Clean roofs and gutters of dead leaves, debris and pine needles that could catch embers.
- Replace or repair any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles to prevent ember penetration.

- Reduce embers that could pass through vents in the eaves by installing 1/8 inch metal mesh screening.
- Clean debris from exterior attic vents and install 1/8 inch metal mesh screening to reduce embers.
- Repair or replace damaged or loose window screens and any broken windows. Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Move any flammable material away from wall exteriors – mulch, flammable plants, leaves and needles, firewood piles – anything that can burn. Remove anything stored underneath decks or porches.

Intermediate zone

5-30' from the furthest exterior point of the home. Landscaping/hardscaping- employing careful landscaping or creating breaks that can help influence and decrease fire behavior

- Clear vegetation from under large stationary propane tanks.
- Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways/paths, patios, and decks.
- Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of four inches.
- Remove ladder fuels (vegetation under trees) so a surface fire cannot reach the crowns. Prune trees up to six to ten feet from the ground; for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.
- Space trees to have a minimum of eighteen feet between crowns with the distance increasing with the percentage of slope.
- Tree placement should be planned to ensure the mature canopy is no closer than ten feet to the edge of the structure.
- Tree and shrubs in this zone should be limited to small clusters of a few each to break up the continuity of the vegetation across the landscape.



Extended zone

30-100 feet, out to 200 feet. Landscaping – the goal here is not to eliminate fire but to interrupt fire's path and keep flames smaller and on the ground.

- Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.
- Remove dead plant and tree material.
- Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.
- Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.
- Trees 30 to 60 feet from the home should have at least 12 feet between canopy tops.*
- Trees 60 to 100 feet from the home should have at least 6 feet between the canopy tops.*

**The distances listed for crown spacing are suggested based on NFPA 1144. However, the crown spacing needed to reduce/prevent crown fire potential could be significantly greater due to slope, the species of trees involved and other site specific conditions. Check with your local forestry professional to get advice on what is appropriate for your property.*

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