

# Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act (SB360)

**By Brian Ballou**  
**Oregon Department of Forestry**

Property owners in the Forest-Urban interface of Jackson County are among the first to be required to take fuel-reduction measures around their homes. The fuel-reduction measures, including firebreaks around structures and along driveways, are required by Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act of 1997 (SB 360).

## **The Fire Protection Act**

The Fire Protection Act was written to mobilize the people who can make the most meaningful difference in reducing fire hazard on private property: the property owners themselves. The goal is to minimize fire danger in subdivisions and neighborhoods and make firefighting safer and more effective.

Wildfires in the 1980s and 1990s compelled the creation of the Oregon Forestland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Act. Dozens of homes burned in less than a decade, and thousands of residents were evacuated during seemingly relentless waves of destructive forest-urban interface fires. The cost of these fires was growing steadily – in dollars spent on suppression, in dollars spent on rebuilding, and in timber losses. The Fire Protection Act was developed to mobilize landowners and to minimize the impact of wildfire on communities.

The Act is focused on vegetative fuels reduction, the common element between feeding a fire and fire behavior. By encouraging property owners to reduce fuel on and around their homes, wildfires will be cooler, slower and more controllable.

## **Fuel Break Requirements**

Fuel breaks are highly effective fire prevention for rural property owners. Firefighters are able to work safely and more effectively where structures and driveways are already protected by fuel breaks that starve fires and keep them low to the ground.

A fuel break is an area with minimal

material that would feed a fire and “ladder fuels” (low-hanging tree branches that help fire climb from the ground into tree crowns). The Act states a ground cover will be “substantially” composed of fire-resistant or nonflammable plants or material. Ground cover can include green lawn, clover, succulents, asphalt, concrete, brick or bare soil (beware bare soil may encourage problem weeds). Dry grass must be trimmed to a height of four inches or less, and grass cuttings, needles, leaves and twigs – must not create a “continuous fuel bed,” or an area where fire may travel unchecked. The fuel break can contain mature healthy trees and shrubs as long as they are not continuous.

Single ornamental plants or isolated groupings of shrubbery, native trees, or other plants may be retained if they are maintained in a green condition, are free of dead plant material, are free of ladder fuel and are located to discourage fire from spreading to adjacent vegetation. Large healthy trees may help shield the house from flying embers and fire brands, however species such as Juniper and arborvitae are too much of a fire hazard.

A secondary fuel break may be required when the fire risk is greatest, such as where steep topography, conifer forest and flammable brush exist, or where a structure has flammable roofing (i.e. cedar shake). A secondary fuel break begins where the primary fuel break ends, and continues 20 to 70 feet. Secondary fuel breaks concentrate on thinning and ladder fuel removal, with less focus on ground fuels.

Other standards include removing branches within ten feet of a chimney or stovepipe that vents a wood-burning device, and removing all dead material from trees overhanging any roof. If there is a deck attached to a structure, all flammable materials must be removed, including needles, leaves, sticks and stored fire wood. Stored firewood or lumber must be kept at least 20 feet from any structure during fire season, or be fully enclosed.

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# Fire Protection Act (SB360) (continued)

## Compliance & Certification

After fire-reduction requirements have been met, property owners need to send a certification form to the Oregon Department of Forestry. Property owners do have the option to develop a site specific fire reduction plan if they are not able to conform to the standards. Certification may be done by the property owner and it requires no inspection by the Department of Forestry.

Once certified, renewal isn't necessary for five years unless a property is sold or a structure is added to the property. Recertification is required when the property changes hands or structures are added.

Property owners may also seek the professional assistance of an accredited assessor. An accredited assessor can evaluate a property, prescribe fuel modification standards, and sign the certification form.

There are three types of accredited assessor. One is a private contractor who must be licensed with the Oregon Construction Contractors Board or with the Landscape Contractors Board, have two years of wildland fire suppression or fire prevention experience, and hold a letter of accreditation from the local Department of Forestry district forester. The second type of

## Oregon's Worst Wildland/Urban Interface Fires

Year	Fire name	Structures burned
1936	Bandon	484
1987	Bland Mountain	14
1990	Awbrey Hall	22
1994	Hull Mountain	44
1996	Skeleton	17
2002	Eyerly	37
2002	Biscuit	14

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## Who Decides What is Forestland-Urban Interface And What is Not?

Forestland-Urban Interface areas are identified on a county-by-county basis. A five-person committee is formed to comb through the maps of areas classified as "forestland," which is defined in Oregon law as "any woodland, brushland, timberland, grazing land or clearing that, during any time of the year, contains enough forest growth, slashing or vegetation to constitute ... a fire hazard, regardless of how the land is zoned or taxed." Forestland areas that meet the following criteria are candidates for inclusion within a forestland-urban interface area:

- The property is 10 acres or smaller
- The property has a structure
- The property is grouped with other properties to create a density of at least four structures per 40 acres
- The property can be defined as either urban or suburban

Exceptions may occur when lands are sandwiched between subdivisions and neighborhoods that meet the fundamental forestland-urban interface identification criteria.

### Where To Get More Information on SB 360

Oregon Department of Forestry  
Southwest Oregon District  
5286 Table Rock Road • Central Point, OR 97502  
(541) 664-0665

# Fire Protection Act (SB360) (continued)

accredited assessor is an employee of a structural fire district. The third type is an employee of, or contractor for, a home owners or property owners association.

## Cost Recovery & Liability

Certification relieves property owners from the liability of cost-recovery created in the Fire Protection Act. Cost recovery measures take effect on properties that are within a forestland-urban interface area and for which a certification form has not been received by the Department of Forestry. In these situations, the state of Oregon may, at its discretion, seek fire cost reimbursement from a property owner if a fire occurs on the property, and the state spends more than routine fire-suppression costs. For

example, if an air tanker is used to suppress a fire on forestland-urban interface property that is not certified, the property owner may be billed for the cost of the air tanker. Cost-recovery liability under the Fire Protection Act is capped at \$100,000.

## Conclusion

Property owners in the forest-urban interface area are being asked to help protect their own land from destructive wildland fires by installing and maintaining fuel breaks. Individuals should recognize that by protecting their own land they are also improving the chances for their neighborhood to withstand damage in the event of a fire.

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## Jackson County Sets Fire Safety Standards For New Development

By Jenna Stanke  
Jackson County Fire Safety Inspector

All new structures proposed for construction within Jackson County's "Hazardous Wildfire Area" are subject to certain standards which will help increase the chance of survival during a wildfire event. Areas within the County that are subject to these standards generally have slopes and/or vegetation types conducive to wildfire hazard. To see if your home or proposed project is within the Wildfire Area, view the map on the County GIS department's website at [www.smartmap.org](http://www.smartmap.org).

All structures that require building permits within the mapped area are required to develop fuelbreaks around the structure, have non-flammable roofing material, and driveway access that will accommodate large fire apparatus. (See the checklist on page 26 for more detail on these requirements.) You can also view the entire Land Development Ordinance at [www.jacksoncounty.org](http://www.jacksoncounty.org). The Wildfire Safety standards are located in Chapter 8.7, and Emergency Vehicle Access is 9.5.4. Click on "Wildfire Safety" for a direct link to these chapters. Please be aware that the standards are subject to change, and it is highly recommended that you contact the Planning Department for the most current requirements. You can also visit the Planning Department for more information on any of these issues if you do not have computer access.

# Jackson County Fire Safety Inspection Information

## SIGNAGE & ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY VEHICLES

**Address signs** allow emergency services personnel to find your home when there is a fire or medical emergency. Reflective signs with numbers at least 3" tall are recommended. Make sure your address signs are posted facing both directions on the road. Address signs are available from most fire districts

**Driveways** need to accommodate large emergency vehicles. Driveways longer than 150' need a flat turnaround area. On long driveways, turnouts allow you to get out and the fire department to get in at the same time in the event of an emergency. Bridges need to be strong enough and wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles.

## DEFENSIBLE SPACE & FIRE PREVENTION

A **Fuelbreak**, an area where flammable vegetation is selectively removed, can provide your home with better defense during a wildfire situation by slowing a fire's approach and reducing its intensity. Fire departments can't always access your home during wildland fires. Having a home that can survive a wildfire on its own frees the firefighters up to fight the fire. If the fire department is available and can access your property, a fuelbreak provides them an area to work safely. The fuelbreak standards also help prevent a structure fire on your property from starting a wildland fire.

**Building materials** are important in fire prevention. Burning embers from fires can be blown a distance of up to a mile ahead of the fire and are a potential threat to your home. Wood roofing is easily ignited by embers and is often the cause of ignition during wildfires. For this reason, all new roofing material must be nonflammable- Class A or B- and no wood roofing is allowed on new construction. All chimneys must have spark arresters.

This list is for informational purposes only and is based on Chapters 8.7 and 9.5.4 of the Land Development Ordinance for Jackson County. For more information, see [www.jacksoncounty.org](http://www.jacksoncounty.org) or contact Jenna Stanke, Fire Safety Inspector, 541.774.6922. [stankejs@jacksoncounty.org](mailto:stankejs@jacksoncounty.org)

# JACKSON COUNTY FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST

## ADDRESS SIGNS:

Address signs are installed at the driveway entrance (visible from both directions) and at all forks in the drive, with directional arrows as needed

## DRIVEWAY STANDARDS:

- Driveway is within 50' of all habitable structures; within 150' of outbuildings
- Driveway is minimum 12' wide, or 14' wide on curves with a radius less than 150'
- Vegetation is cleared to a height of 13 1/2' and width of 14' along entire driveway
- Driveway is designed for a 50,000 pound load, or has at least 6" of base rock
- Maximum grade of drive is 15%
- Driveway curves have a minimum radius of 40'
- Driveway has turnaround within 150' of structure, and every one half mile along drive.
- Turnouts are provided every 800' and are 50' long, 7' wide, and have 25' tapers
- Gates are a minimum 14' wide,
- Bridges have driving surfaces that are a minimum 8-1/2' wide, and 14' clear minimum width above the surface of the bridge
- Culverts are at least 18' long, and extend beyond the toe of fill
- Bridges and culverts are designed to have a 50,000 pound load capacity
- Fuelbreaks, constructed to the standards below, are constructed 15' from the edge, along both sides of the driveway

A **FUELBREAK**, measured from the outermost projection of the structure (including decks and overhangs) is developed around all sides of the building. The fuelbreak must be 100', but if slopes on the site are greater than 20%, an additional 50' is required on the downhill and both sides of structure:

- Dead plant material is removed, including dead branches on living trees, and fallen dead vegetation that isn't significantly decomposed
- Branches of deciduous trees are a minimum of 10' from the roof, evergreen branches a minimum of 25'; branches within 10' of stove pipe or chimney outlets are removed
- Vegetation is thinned to remove "ladder fuels" and to break up continuous vegetation, trees are limbed up to a height of 10' or one-third the height of the tree
- No juniper or other highly combustible shrubbery is present
- Firewood piles are at least 30' from all structures
- Grass is kept to a height of less than 6"

## BUILDING MATERIALS

Plans for proposed structures will be checked for roof material (must be Class A or B, and no wood roofing is allowed) and spark arresters.



## Josephine County Fire Safety Information

# You are at risk!

### **Josephine County wildlands burn.**

Trees, brush and grass are fuel for wildfire. The structures you build in the county are also fuel for wildfires. The provisions of Article 76 of the land use code will reduce the risk of your structure burning in a wildfire.

Your first step is to visit your **fire service provider** which may be an established fire district or a private fire service. They need to know that you are there in order to be able to provide emergency services. They are also an excellent source of information on how to reduce the risk of wildfire burning your property.

You need to place clearly visible **address signs** where your driveway leaves the main road & at every intersection thereafter. Firefighters and emergency medical personnel can't help you if they can't find you. Finding your property fast and putting out a fire early is the best chance of saving your life and property in the event of a fire.

Your **driveway** including bridges & culverts must be built to carry heavy fire equipment. If your driveway is too steep or poorly surfaced, fire equipment may not be able to reach your home. Gates must be wide enough to allow passage of fire equipment. Turnouts along long driveways will allow fire equipment to reach your home while your family is escaping a fire. Vehicle turnaround areas near your home

allow fire equipment to maneuver safely and allow firefighters to exit if the fire becomes too intense.

You can reduce the risk of your home becoming fuel for a wildfire by reducing the existing fuel (trees, brush and grass) around your home. A fire safety zone (fuel-break), an area where flammable vegetation is selectively removed, will slow down a wildfire's approach and reduce its intensity. Fire equipment can't always access your home during wildfires. Having a home that can survive a wildfire on its own will allow firefighters to fight the fire. If the fire equipment is available and can access your property, a fire safety zone provides firefighters an area to work safely. The fire safety zone will also help prevent a structure fire on your property from starting a wildland fire.

**Construction materials** can also reduce the chance of your home becoming fuel for a wildfire. Burning embers from wildfires can be blown a mile ahead of the fire. Wood roofing is easily ignited by embers and is often the cause of ignition during wildfires. For this reason, all roofing material must have fire rating class A or B (no wood roofing is allowed) and all chimneys must have spark arresters.

**Find more fire safety information at:**  
**[www.co.josephine.or.us/wildfire/](http://www.co.josephine.or.us/wildfire/) and**  
**[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)**

# Josephine County Land Use Code Article 76

## Wildfire and Emergency Service Safety Standards

### Self-Certification Checklist

**Directions: Check all applicable safety standards or place "NA" (not applicable) in the space provided. All owners of record must certify compliance by signing this form and returning it to the Planning Office. A Certificate of Occupancy for your dwelling will then be issued by the Building Safety Department.**

#### Type of Dwelling:

1. \_\_\_ New Dwelling (check all safety standards or an "NA" if not applicable).
2. \_\_\_ Relocated or Replacement Dwelling (check safety standards #24 through #37only).
3. \_\_\_ Improvement to an Existing Dwelling (check safety standards #27 through #30 and #36 & #37 only).

#### Access:

4. \_\_\_ Driveway development that disturbed areas with slopes at or above 15% or in granitic soils meet an approved erosion control plan prepared by a registered engineer.
5. \_\_\_ The driveway is developed to within 50' of all habitable structures and 150' of non-habitable structures.
6. \_\_\_ The driveway is at least 12' wide in straight sections and at least 14' wide in all curves that have a centerline radius at any point less than 150'.
7. \_\_\_ Driveway curves have a minimum curve radius of 48'.
8. \_\_\_ The driveway approach has an inner radius of 20' or more in both directions.
9. \_\_\_ No portion of the driveway has grades that exceed 15%, except where grades increase to 18% for intervals of not more than 100' and there are no more than three 100' sections in excess of 15% per 1,000' of driveway.
10. \_\_\_ All driveway curves have a centerline radius of less than 150' and do not exceed a 15% grade.
11. \_\_\_ Any change in the driveway grade does not exceed 1% in 3'.
12. \_\_\_ The driveway over the entire length and width is clear and will be kept clear of obstructions for a minimum vertical distance of 13.5'.
13. \_\_\_ A strip at least 2' wide along both sides of the driveway is and will be kept clear of obstructions that are more than 6" in height.
14. \_\_\_ Driveways on slopes below 15% are constructed with a base course of 6" - 8" of pit run rock, and a leveling course of 2" - 3" of 3/4" minus angular gravel, and compacted by proof-rolling the rocked and graveled courses with a fully loaded 10 cubic yard dump truck or other vehicle with equivalent weight; or constructed to standards specified by a registered engineer certifying that the surface, as built, will support 50,000 pounds, provide adequate drainage and traction and prevent significant degradation or deterioration as a result of rain or freezing and thawing.
15. \_\_\_ Driveways on slopes 15% or greater are constructed to standards specified by a registered engineer certifying that the surface, as built, will support 50,000, pounds, provide adequate drainage and traction and prevent significant degradation or deterioration as a result of rain or freezing and thawing.

# Josephine County Land Use Code Article 76

## Wildfire and Emergency Service Safety Standards

### Self-Certification Checklist (continued)

16. \_\_\_ Driveway transitions from dirt, rock or gravel to a hardened surface have a hardened surface extended 25' beyond the change in slope to minimize dig outs and other deterioration of the surface.
17. \_\_\_ Driveway structures or fills and culverts crossing live streams, ravines, gullies, irrigation ditches and similar features have the same width as the width required for the driveway.
18. \_\_\_ All bridges are certified by a registered engineer as being capable of supporting at least 50,000 pounds.
19. \_\_\_ All culverts are a minimum of 12" in diameter and carry an American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) HS-20 Loading rating.
20. \_\_\_ Driveways leading to water sources used for fire suppression terminate in a turnaround that is surfaced consistent with the surface requirements for the driveway and have a minimum inner radius of 27' and a minimum outer radius of 42'.
21. \_\_\_ Driveways in excess of 600' have vehicle turnouts immediately adjacent to the driveway that are 12' wide by 25' long at a maximum spacing of every 400' and surfaced with the same surface as the driveway.
22. \_\_\_ Gates are set back at least 30' from a public road or highway and have a clear opening of at least 12' on straight stretches or 14' on curves.
23. \_\_\_ Driveways will be maintained to the above standards for accessibility and protection of fire fighters and other emergency personnel.

#### Signs:

24. \_\_\_ Address and direction signs with numbers or letters at least 3 inches high of light reflective material are permanently posted and will be maintained at driveway entrances, at any intersections, and to the location of any water sources used for fire suppression so that they clearly and effectively direct approaching emergency vehicles.

#### Slopes:

25. \_\_\_ Home sites on slopes above 40% have been developed only after the disturbance or alteration was authorized by the requirements for Modification of Standards contained in Article 76.090 of the RLDC.

#### Construction Materials:

26. \_\_\_ Roofing materials are Fire Rating Class A or B.
27. \_\_\_ Chimneys and stovepipes are capped with a spark arrester
28. \_\_\_ Areas under porches, decks and balconies 3' or less above the ground are enclosed with 1/4" or smaller, non-combustible, corrosion resistant metal mesh.
29. \_\_\_ Areas under decks, porches, etc. greater than 3' above the ground are free of combustible materials
30. \_\_\_ Attic openings, soffit vents, foundation louvers and vents and other direct openings in outside walls, overhangs and roofs are no larger than 144 square inches and are covered with 1/4" noncombustible, corrosion resistant metal mesh.

# Josephine County Land Use Code Article 76

## Wildfire and Emergency Service Safety Standards

### Self-Certification Checklist (continued)

**Fire Safety Zones (fuel breaks):**

31. \_\_\_ A primary fire safety zone is in place for a distance of 50' in all directions from the dwelling.

32. \_\_\_ Ground cover in the primary safety zone consists of asphalt, bare soil, concrete, rock or other nonflammable material; or dead grass cut to 4" or less, leaves, needles, twigs and other similar flammable materials, provided such materials are at least 4' away from structures; or an area of low growing vegetation species such as green grass, ivy, succulents and other similar species in a green condition and substantially free of dead plant material; and single specimens or isolated groupings of native trees and shrubs, and fire resistant ornamental trees, shrubs and other plants, in a green condition and substantially free of dead plant material and pruned and maintained so that crowns are separated by a distance of 15' and limbs below 8' in height are removed. (Live fruit trees are exempt from crown separation distances and limb height above the ground.)

33. \_\_\_ Vegetation is pruned and maintained so that no limbs touch a structure, or overhang a roof or are within 15' of a chimney or stovepipe.

34. \_\_\_ Open firewood storage is at least 30' from all structures.

35. \_\_\_ A secondary fire safety zone is in place around the primary fire safety zones for an additional 50' in all directions. On sites on which the slope abutting any structure exceeds 20%, the secondary fire safety zones extend an additional 50' in all directions. Trees within the secondary safety zone are pruned and maintained so that a distance of 15' separates trunks and any branches below 8' in height are removed. Live fruit trees are not required to meet these spacing and limbing requirements. Under the remaining trees, small trees, brush, dead vegetation and other debris have been removed.

**Fire Service Protection:**

36. \_\_\_ In a Fire District: \_\_\_ Applegate, \_\_\_ Illinois Valley, \_\_\_ Williams, or \_\_\_ Wolf Creek.

37. \_\_\_ Have a Fire Service Contract with: \_\_\_ Grants Pass Rural Fire Department \_\_\_ Rural Metro Fire Department.

**By signing this document I(we) certify the above standards have been performed.**

Property owner(s) Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_