

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

FIREBREAK

(Ft.)

CODE 394

DEFINITION

A permanent or temporary strip of bare or vegetated land planned to retard fire.

PURPOSE

- Reduce the spread of wildfire
- Contain prescribed burns

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all land uses where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent, and shall consist of fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground or a combination of these.

Firebreaks will be of sufficient width and length to contain the expected fire.

Firebreaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources being protected.

Erosion control measures shall be installed to prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Plant species selected for vegetated firebreaks will be non-invasive and capable of retarding fire.

CONSIDERATIONS

Use barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds, rock cliffs, roads, field borders, skid trails, landings, drainage canals, railroads, utility right-of-ways, cultivated land or other areas as existing firebreaks. Where practical,

construction of new firebreak areas should utilize these existing features. Electric lines can be hazardous in heavy smoke as they may conduct electricity.

When using barriers, consider effects on wildlife and fisheries.

Attempt to locate firebreaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms.

If winds are predictable, firebreaks should be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Consider the selection of plant species that will enhance the needs of wildlife in the area.

Refer to Idaho's Critical Area Planting standard (342) for the selection and application of vegetative species necessary to control erosion.

Refer to Idaho's Pest Management standard (595) for guidance in controlling noxious weeds.

Locate on the contour, where practicable, to minimize risk of soil erosion.

Design and layout should include multiple uses.

Consider the beneficial and other effects of installation of a firebreak on cultural resources and threatened and endangered species, natural areas, riparian areas and wetlands.

In forested applications, comply with Idaho Statute "Title 38: Forestry Forest Products and Stumpage Districts, Chapter 13, 'Forest Practices Act'" requirements. Consult with the local Idaho Department of Land's office for permits and guidance.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or download it from the electronic [Field Office Technical Guide](#) for your state.

**NRCS, IDAHO
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PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan and burn plan or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Mow, disk or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a buildup of excess litter and to control weeds. Treatment should be timed to reduce impacts to nesting birds, when possible.

Inspect all firebreaks for woody materials, such as dead limbs or blown down trees, and remove them from the firebreak.

Inspect firebreaks at least annually and rework bare ground firebreaks as necessary to keep them clear of flammable vegetation.

Repair erosion control measures as necessary to ensure proper function.

Access by vehicles or people will be controlled to prevent damage.

Bare ground firebreaks, which are no longer needed, will be stabilized