



# Defensible Space Advisor E-Newsletter

[www.areyoufiresafe.com](http://www.areyoufiresafe.com)

(530) 272-1122

October 2017

## Hello Defensible Space Advisors!

### An Early Autumn?

With the excessive heat this summer, Autumn seems to have come very early in some areas. This means that there are already a lot of leaves, pine needles, and small twigs, accumulating in roof gutters, on roofs and decks, and around houses and other structures.

Not only does this mean some early work for us as property owners to keep our own homes safe, but it also means something else.

When we do Defensible Space Advisory Visits, it would probably be a very good idea to stress to the occupants of the homes that we visit, that just cleaning up and mitigating the fire dangers that we point out to them one time will not be the end of their work for this fire season.

Every few weeks, they will still need to check their roofs and decks, around their structures and fences, and rake, sweep, or blow away whatever has accumulated during the week.

They will also need to check for fallen branches around the structures, and especially on any roofs where the greatest danger to their homes will occur. Remember, in California, the worst months historically for wildfires are September, October, and November. So, we're not out of fire season yet!

### Additional Field Experience

Recently, I have spoken with a number of you who have done the Defensible Space Advisor training, and want to help out with our vitally important task of visiting home owners to advise them on ways to make, and keep, their homes safe, but have expressed the desire to have some additional field work experience before you feel sufficiently confident to go out on your own.

I have already done a number of these trips with volunteers, and I'd be delighted to accompany you any time you want to do a visit. Just shoot me an email at [adriangcameron@gmail.com](mailto:adriangcameron@gmail.com).

Keep safe!

*Adrian Cameron*

## **DEFENSIBLE SPACE ADVISOR TRAINING**

***Do you know someone who would enjoy helping to educate the community about defensible space?***

***OCTOBER 30-31, 2017***

***Enrollment NOW open! Call (530) 272-1122***



# Ask the Expert

*Terry McMahan  
Deputy Fire Marshal*

*Nevada County Consolidated Fire District*

## Can You Achieve Defensible Space Across Property Boundaries?

Several people have asked how to obtain their 100 feet of Defensible Space when their actual property line is less than 100 feet from the home.

This appears to be a simple question, but the answer is a bit complex because two major factors come into play, Public Resource Code 4291, and the requirements of some insurance companies.

When discussing the legal requirements for defensible space, Public Resource Code 4291 is the code that addresses defensible space. In a nutshell, the code says that you need 100 feet of defensible space or to the property line, whichever is nearer. The code is clear that you do not need to clear any farther than to your property line.

On the other side of the coin, some homeowner insurance companies will require 100 feet or more of defensible space regardless of the property line. This issue often occurs when a vacant or large parcel exists next to a parcel with a home and the vacant parcel has not been maintained.

Since there was not much that the Fire Departments could do to require the neighboring parcel to clean their property - except to send them a courtesy letter asking them to reduce the vegetation within 100 feet of their neighbors, we started to look for solutions. Property owners were not only calling the Fire Departments, but when we told them that there wasn't a code or law in place to address this concern, folks started contacting the Board of Supervisors. A committee was formed to discuss this issue which ultimately resulted in the Board of Supervisors adopting Ordinance 2411 on June 10, 2016.



This Ordinance allows those property owners who cannot obtain the required defensible space to file a complaint with their local fire department. A fire official can in turn inspect the property to determine the issue, and send the property owner a violation notice. This doesn't mean that all properties will be completely cleared, but it does provide for defensible space. Since this ordinance covers more information than I can write in this article, I urge you to read it and see if it would apply to your situation. If in doubt, call your local fire department. Some fire departments, such as Nevada County Consolidated and the Penn Valley Fire Districts, require you to fill out a complaint form before they will look at the property. Please keep in mind that these complaints will be handled as time permits, and may not be the top priority at the time. Also, as the dry season progresses, we may not want people out running gasoline powered equipment with the potential to ignite a fire doing the right thing at the wrong time.

*Terry McMahan*  
Deputy Fire Marshal, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District