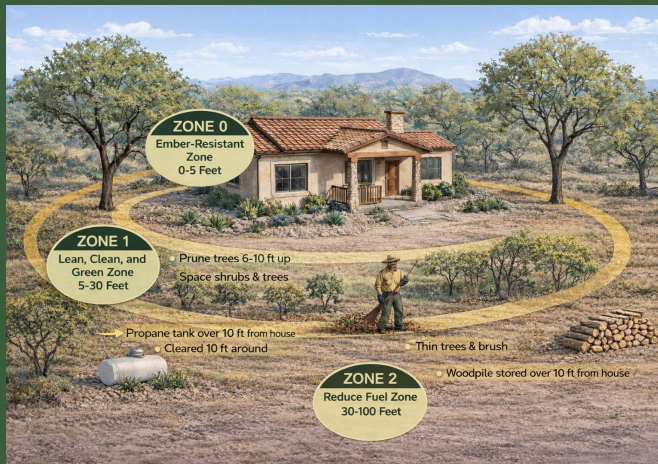


Creating Defensible Space Around Your Home

Defensible space is the buffer between your home and surrounding vegetation or combustible materials. It helps slow or stop the spread of wildfire and provides firefighters with a safer area to defend your property. In Cochise County's dry, windy conditions, defensible space is one of the most effective ways to reduce wildfire risk.



Zone 0 — Ember-Resistant Zone (0–5 feet)

This is the most critical area around your home.

- Remove all dead plants, leaves, mesquite pods, cottonwood fluff, pine needles, and debris.
- Do not use bark or wood mulch—use gravel, pavers, or decorative rock instead.
- Keep firewood, lumber, and propane tanks out of this zone.
- Remove vegetation and combustible items from under decks, porches, and stairs.
- Limit plants to low-growing, well-watered, non-woody species.

Zone 1 — Lean, Clean, and Green Zone (5–30 feet)

This zone reduces the chance of fire reaching your home.

- Remove dead or dying grass, shrubs, mesquite, and cottonwood saplings.
- Create horizontal and vertical spacing between all plants.
- Prune lower branches on mature trees 6–10 feet above the ground, but never remove more than one-third of the live crown.
- Keep tree branches at least 10 feet away from roofs and chimneys.
- Mow native grasses to 4 inches or less and keep vegetation irrigated when possible.

Zone 2 — Reduce Fuel Zone (30–100 feet or to property line)

This zone slows fire spread and reduces fire intensity.

- Thin mesquite and cottonwood stands to break up continuous fuels.
- Remove ladder fuels that allow fire to climb into tree canopies.
- Maintain proper spacing between trees, especially on slopes and drainages.
- Remove fallen branches and accumulated leaf litter regularly.
- Store firewood at least 30 feet from structures and maintain 10 feet of cleared space around the woodpile.

Special Considerations for Cochise County

- Mesquite trees produce fine fuels (leaves and pods) that ignite easily—rake and remove them often.
- Cottonwood trees shed large amounts of leaves and fluff—clean yards, roofs, and gutters frequently.
- Strong seasonal winds can carry embers long distances—maintain defensible space year-round.



DON'T SMOKE OUT YOUR NEIGHBORS

Pile burning tips
For Cochise
County





Many smoke complaints in Cochise County come from burns that were legal, but poorly timed or poorly prepared.

These tips are not additional rules — they are proven best practices to help your burn finish faster and produce less smoke and avoid upsetting your neighbors.

Weather Conditions

Burning during poor weather conditions can cause smoke to settle or become trapped near the ground.

Pile Preparation

Burning piles that are poorly constructed or not fully dried can lead to excess smoke production.

Conscientious burning protects your land and community. By preparing your pile properly, burning during the right weather conditions, and following local permit rules, you can reduce smoke, avoid complaints, and support healthier air for everyone in Cochise County.

MANAGING FOR WEATHER

Local weather conditions that cause smoke to stay low to the ground or drift back down after rising are known as ***inversion layers***. They often occur on cold mornings before the sun heats up the earth and air, trapping smoke like a lid on a pot. Once an inversion breaks, warm air close to the ground can rise up and generate lift.

GETTING YOUR SMOKE TO LIFT AND DISPERSE

Inversion conditions can turn a clean burn into a nuisance. Luckily, you can time your burn around air movement to ensure you lift your smoke up and away from your neighbors.

1. **Avoid early morning and evening burns.** Permissible burning hours begin one hour after sunrise, but daily conditions should always dictate when you start igniting.

2. **Burn on days with *light wind* and good air movement.** Avoid burning in still, foggy, or stagnant conditions; these conditions often indicate poor smoke dispersion or a temperature inversion.

3. **Test smoke drift *before* igniting your whole pile.** After completing all permit and notification requirements, ignite only a small portion of the approved pile. Continue only if the smoke rises and disperses away from homes and roadways.

HOW TO BUILD A CLEAN-BURNING PILE

Learn how to construct piles to avoid creating excess smoke and burning unlawful materials.

BURN APPROVED MATERIAL

Natural vegetative debris only — no trash, lumber, or treated wood. Material must be free of dirt and excess moisture from rain.

STACK FOR QUICK COMBUSTION

Build compact, vertical piles rather than wide, sparse ones to allow air and flames to rise quickly for cleaner, hotter combustion.

DRY MATERIAL THOROUGHLY

Large limbs >6": dry for at least 60 days
Brush and branches <6": dry for 15 days
Leaves: aerate and fully dry — never burn wet leaves!

IGNITE QUICKLY

Light your pile fast and thoroughly to avoid prolonged smoldering and prevent lingering smoke. Never use accelerants.

BURN ON-SITE

Burn only what was grown on your property — no hauling in materials.

BURN LEGALLY

Burn barrels are prohibited in Arizona. Burn only by the method and at the location listed on your permit.