

## Steps to achieve compliance with Ruidoso's wildfire hazard reduction ordinance (2006-04)

### 1. Decide what needs to be done to your property to achieve compliance.

Ordinance 2006-04 guides property owners in deciding which trees to cut and which ones to retain. Three objectives are considered:

- reduce wildfire hazards
- increase forest health
- enhance natural landscape opportunities.

Balancing these objectives with the right emphasis for each property requires property owner input. Each lot is unique. The easiest way to achieve compliance is to call Village Forestry at 575-257-5544 and talk to Kathy Richardson who can schedule a lot assessment with you and one of our foresters. **It is a free service.** The forester will meet with you on site and explain what needs to be done. If you bring some yellow tree marking paint or ribbon flagging (any hardware store) you can mark the trees that need to be removed as you and the forester walk around. Your input is valuable in achieving compliance as there is *"more than one way to skin the cat"*.

Another way to achieve compliance is to "do it yourself". First, read the *Fuels Management Standards* and *Forestry Terms* on the previous page and begin with the simple and more obvious actions like:

- rake pine needles 30 feet from structures
- remove all flammable material like scrap lumber and plant cuttings 30 feet from structures
- remove all standing dead trees
- prune the bottom branches of small trees (less than 20 feet tall) about 25% or their height
- prune the bottom branches of taller trees (more than 20 feet tall) about 6 feet up from the ground
- prune limbs that are close to the top of your fireplace
- Remove needles and leaves from your gutters
- Locate firewood more than 20 feet from your home

Next, look at the remaining trees and reduce (cut down and remove) the number of trees to a point where the tops of the trees called the "crowns" (see forestry terms) of individual trees or groupings of trees called "clumps" (see forestry terms) are spaced no less than 10 feet apart. "Ladder fuels" (see forestry terms) are very important to understand. At this point we recommend calling us to get a forester's eye on your property. Again it is a free service. Remember trees are easy to cut down and hard to glue back on! You want to get it right the first time.

A third way to achieve compliance is to simply contact a contractor and let them "put you in minimum compliance". Contractors from the Village of Ruidoso approved contractor list know generically what to do to achieve compliance. The down side is they will not know any particular preferences you may have to keep

certain trees or remove others. This is, however, a good way of achieving compliance if you live out of town and do not visit here very often.

Some properties will need a lot of work and some will just need to be touched up. For the most part, vacant lots that have never had any thinning or brush removal done will need the most work. Highly developed properties like those around a golf course or where a high degree of yard maintenance is ongoing probably will need a minimum of work to achieve compliance. Generally, steep sloped lots will be more expensive to achieve compliance than a flatter lot with good (drivable) access.

**2. Decide who is going to do the work.** You can hire someone, do it yourself, or some combination. The Village of Ruidoso does not dictate how you achieve compliance but has developed a courtesy contractor list (see "forestry contractor list") to help simplify the process of securing a qualified contractor if you so decide. The Village is your advocate and we require contractors maintain minimum standards to keep a place on our list to serve you. To be on our list a contractor must:

- Secure and maintain a valid Village of Ruidoso business license
- Complete three jobs prior to getting on the list and have the Forestry Department inspect the jobs and interview the property owners to insure capability and customer satisfaction
- Attend quarterly forest contractor meetings and sign a statement of intent to uphold and accurately implement all of the Forestry ordinances.

**Please note** - We do not regulate a contractor's pricing or regulate their insurances. That is between the contractor and the property owner so be sure to get a number of quotes and ask about liability coverage (usually \$300,000.00 minimum) and workman's comp. "Bonding" has no real application in this kind of work. These contractors generally do not ask for any money up front and generally guarantee their work to achieve minimum compliance. We always recommend property owners hold some payment back until the Village has inspected the work to insure these busy contractors make time to do the little touch ups that may be required by the Village to get your property in compliance.

**3. Call Village Forestry for an inspection.** After the work is complete you must call and get an inspection to verify compliance. Call Kathy Richardson (575) 257-5544 x221 and ask for a final inspection. If there is more to do, the forester will itemize the things necessary and call or mail the list to you. If the forester passes the property Forestry will log that information into our database to show compliance. We will then mail you a Certificate of Compliance and change your status to "compliant". This will automatically reduce the fee you are charged for yard waste removal and that fee reduction will be in effect for the certification period of ten years. After that your bill will automatically revert to the "non-compliant" fee rate and a recertification will be required. Recertification is necessary because vegetation grows and expands and lots need to be maintained. Usually recertification does not require any additional tree removal but ladder fuels develop and crowns grow together and must be addressed.