



Los Altos Hills County Fire District
Community Education and Risk Reduction Residential Program
Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment and Rebate Program Guidelines
ADVISORY
Issued on March 21, 2023
Revised January 1, 2026

Introduction.

The Community Education & Risk Reduction (CERR) Residential Program provides educational services to residents to reduce the risk of wildfire and increase protection of life and property. The educational services are based on principles of fire science and the District's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Annex 4. The Program helps residents harden their property to better withstand destruction by fires and to build neighborhood resilience.

This program aligns with the District's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Goal 1: Prevention, Protection, and Resiliency, by incentivizing residents to take on vegetation mitigation efforts, educating residents on how to create defensible space around their home and structures, and strengthening community resiliency throughout the District.

Residential-focused CERR services include the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment and Rebate Program, the Firewise USA Program, and additional District Residential-focused Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction (IHFR) Programs such as Defensible Space Brush Chipping and Debris Removal Program, and the Defensible Space Fire Fuel Reduction Monthly Drop-off Program at Foothill College. Residents with property along evacuation road hardening projects are also invited to participate in the removal of hazardous vegetation abutting the roadway by participating in a Right of Entry (ROE) Program.

HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program. The District contracts with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (FSC) to manage and operate the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program.

Program Benefits and Requirements:

1. The HIZ Assessment is conducted by a staff member on the property site to examine possible hazardous fire fuel risks within the defensible space of homes and other structures. Specifically, the assessment identifies hazardous vegetation and brush (fire fuels) and proposes steps to mitigate these risks to reduce destruction and damage to homes, buildings, and property during fire and wildfire events.

The Program offers a rebate for implementing the HIZ Assessment recommendations. Residents are incentivized to act on this urgent life and safety concern by reducing risks of fire

and wildfire.

- a. Residents may apply for 50% reimbursement of the eligible costs incurred for the completed implementation of qualifying HIZ vegetation mitigation recommendations for a rebate of up to \$3,000 per property, per calendar year. Structural and home hardening recommendations are supplied in an HIZ Assessment but are not rebate-eligible. To qualify for the Rebate Program, residents are required to use a licensed contractor for vegetation removal, brush cutting, and tree trimming. Tree removal does not qualify for a rebate. **Trees are defined as saplings over 8 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).**
- b. HIZ recommendations must be completed, and rebate requests must be submitted **within 2 years of the HIZ Assessment.**
- c. Rebate Processing: Effective January 1, 2026, all rebate applications shall be submitted online. Residents shall include after photos of all qualifying rebate-eligible items and **itemized** licensed contractor invoices to verify expenses. Once the application is approved, the District, in partnership with the FSC, will process the rebate request. The District will process one rebate request per calendar year.

2. Residents can learn more about the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program and register online: <https://www.lahcf.org/programs-for-residents/hiz-program/>
3. HIZ Assessment requests are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, and are limited in number per month. Rebates are payable from FSC after verification by a District representative that the HIZ recommendations were implemented, and rebate requirements were satisfied. Rebates are subject to District approval and funding availability.
4. HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program services include:
 - a. Specific and personalized property assessments and recommendations on how residents can create and maintain a 100-ft defensive space zone around their home and structures on their property,
 - b. Resident education on hardening properties by identifying and removing hazardous brush and vegetation (fire fuels) to make properties more defensible in the event of a wildfire and increasing fire safety for the neighborhood,
 - c. Resident education on hardening the home structure to mitigate damage from fire and wildfire. Note – structure hardening and mitigations are not rebate-eligible.
 - d. Resident education on maintaining property hygiene once hazardous fire fuels are reduced or eliminated,
 - e. Resident education on resources for wildfire mitigation and District programs and resources, include:
 - i. HIZ Assessments of resident's property,
 - ii. HIZ Rebate Program to encourage residents to implement the HIZ

Assessment recommendations,

- iii. Monthly Defensible Space Brush Chipping and Debris Removal Program,
- iv. Defensible Space Fuel Reduction Monthly Drop-off Program at Foothill College,
- v. Emergency preparedness workshops and training for residents offered by the District in conjunction with Santa Clara County FireSafe Council and Santa Clara County Fire Department,
- vi. Neighborhood Networks to promote evacuation planning, drills, and neighborhood resiliency,
- vii. Residents with property along evacuation road hardening projects are also invited to participate in the removal of hazardous fuels abutting the roadway by participating in a Right of Entry (ROE) Program,
- viii. Supporting residents' efforts to establish Firewise USA Communities in neighborhoods, and
- ix. Promoting and supporting resident neighborhood and resiliency in preparation and response to emergencies and disaster events.

5. Activities that are eligible for the Rebate Program.

Examples of **Rebate-eligible activities** include (this list is not exhaustive and more details for the specific recommendation will be provided in the Assessment):

- Cutting or removing annual grasses and weeds within the 100-ft zone
- Removing grass and weed clippings, leaf, and needle litter within the 100-ft zone
- Removing clippings, leaf and needle litter, or other vegetation debris from gutters, from porch surfaces, or from under porches and decks
- Limbing any trees with branches within 10 feet of chimney or stovepipe outlet, or limbs overhanging structures
- Limbing or clearing vegetation that may create a “fire ladder” within the 100-ft zone. Tree removal is excluded.
- Removing vegetation within the immediate or 5-ft zone, or Zone 0. Tree removal is excluded.
- Removing hazardous vegetation (bamboo, juniper, pampas, jubata, broom, other)
- Creating horizontal spacing between vegetation
- Removing vegetation that may impede roadway access or are prone to ignition. Tree removal is excluded.

Examples of activities that are **not rebate-eligible**, but are encouraged to improve property resiliency and community safety, include:

- Removing dead, diseased or dying trees
- Removing and trimming grasses, weeds, tree limbs, brush, and bushes outside of the 100-ft zone
- Clearing non-vegetation combustibles from around propane tanks
- Replacing combustible items like natural fiber doormats or wooden furniture with non-combustible items
- Moving stored lumber, wood products, building materials, or other combustibles such as plastic trash and recycling bins out of the 30-ft zone
- Home hardening and hardscape installations, such as replacing or repairing parts of the home with non-combustible materials or safer materials (i.e., metal or fire-resistant roofing, metal gutters, multi-pane windows, brick or masonry siding, ember-resistant roofs, vents, and screens, etc.) or adding hardscapes such as concrete, tiles, rock, and metal gates.

The lists are not inclusive of all examples.

When a resident receives the HIZ Assessment, the recommendations will indicate whether the activities or improvements are eligible for the rebate. The resident may choose to implement any recommendation from the assessment, but only those recommendations indicated as 'eligible' will be considered as part of the rebate application. The District determination of the eligibility for the rebate is final.

Program Goals. The overarching goal of the HIZ Rebate program is to make the broader community safer. Specifically, by participating in the Residential CERR Program, residents will learn: 1) how to identify hazardous fire fuels; 2) what resources are available for removal of fire fuels to harden their property; 3) how to create and maintain defensive zones around structures; and 4) how to establish hazardous fire fuel mitigation as a neighborhood effort through Firewise USA.

These programs and actions will result in more informed residents and safer neighborhoods and will enable residents to prepare their property to be more resilient to fires and wildfires. The HIZ assessment and vegetation mitigation activities may help with insurance renewals and potential rate discounts. Contact your insurance provider to determine eligibility.

General Comments

The District's CERR Program, including the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program, is subject to funding availability, staff availability, and the requirements and procedures developed by the District's Board of Commissioners. The District does not guarantee services for each request, and the availability of services and programs may vary from year to year. The District makes the final decision if activities and improvements on the property are eligible and qualify for the Rebate Program.

The Community Education & Risk Reduction (CERR) Program may change and adapt as fire prevention measures change and new strategies, priorities, and best practices for fire fuel reduction are developed. **This Advisory is intended to be a living document that will be updated and revised as the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program process and operations develop.**

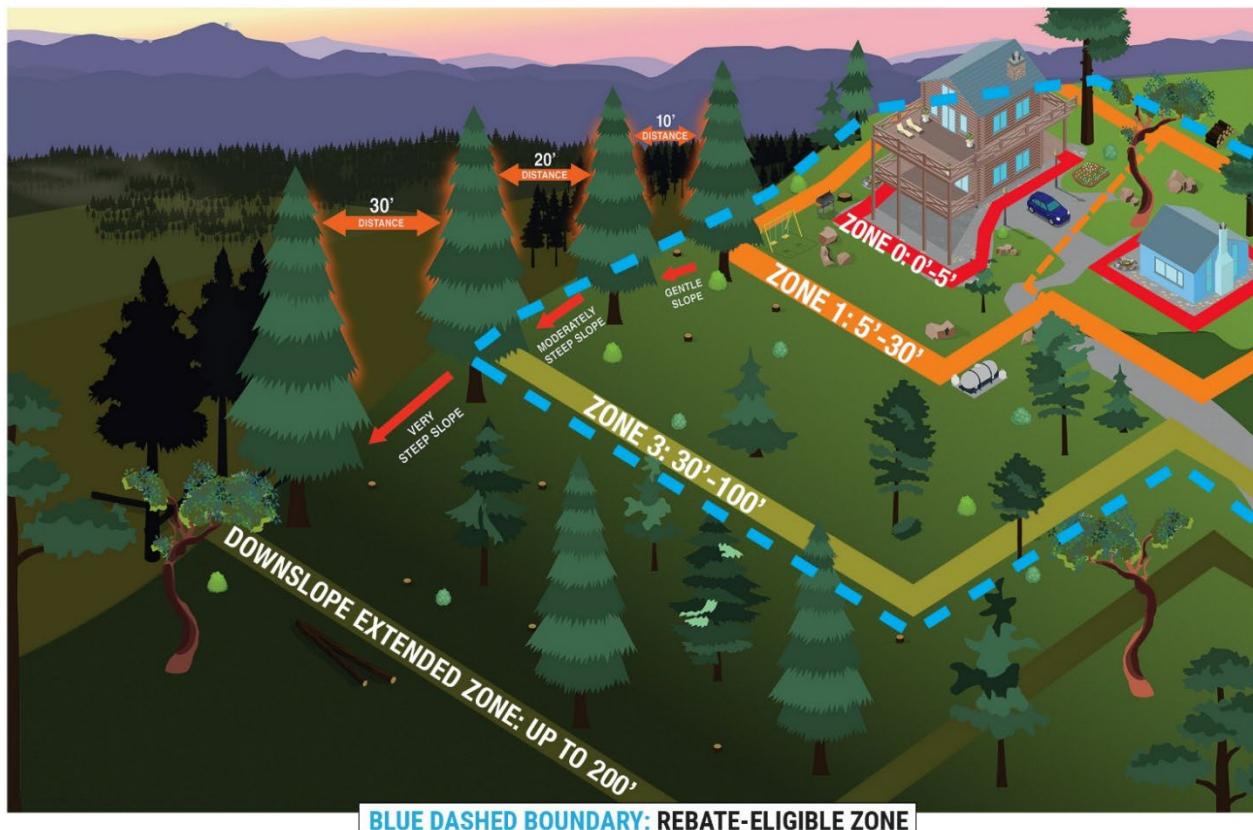
Due to the increasing impact of drought, pathogens, and environmental conditions that negatively affect trees, brush, and vegetation buildup, the District has received an increasing number of requests for hazardous vegetation mitigation services from residents. Residents are encouraged to take personal action and to remove hazardous fire fuels, vegetation, and dead, dying, or diseased trees and brush on their property.

Property owners are responsible for the care, safety, and removal of hazardous fire fuels, vegetation, and brush on their property. The District's Residential CERR Program is designed to increase fire prevention and protection but does not replace residents' obligation to maintain their property safely and remove hazardous fire fuels, vegetation, hazardous trees, and brush.

The CERR Program uses fire science principles to help residents make their properties more resilient to events of destruction by nature. District programs do not guarantee that homes and structures will survive in the event of a fire, wildfire, or other disaster.

Advisory Updates: March 19, 2024, August 20, 2024, October 9, 2024, January 1, 2026

Attachment: Defensible Space Illustration



End of Advisory



Los Altos Hills County Fire District ~~Integrated Hazardous Fuel~~
~~Community Education and Risk~~ Reduction ~~Residential~~ Program
Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment and Rebate Program Guidelines

ADVISORY

Issued on March 21, 2023

Revised ~~October 9, 2024~~January 1, 2026

Introduction.

The ~~Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District or LAHCFD)~~Community Education & Risk Reduction (CERR) Residential ~~focused~~ Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction (IHFR) Program provides educational services to residents with vegetation mitigation services to reduce the risk of wildfire and increase protection of life and property. The educational services are based on principles of fire science principles and the District's Community ~~Wildland~~Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Annex 4. The Program helps residents harden their property to better withstand destruction by fires and to build neighborhood resilience.

This program aligns with the District's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Goal 1: Prevention, Protection, and Resiliency, by incentivizing residents to take on large vegetation mitigation efforts, educating residents on how to create defensible space around their propertyhome and structures, and strengthening community resiliency throughout the District.

Residential-focused ~~IHFR~~CERR services include the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment and Rebate Program, the Firewise USA Program, and additional District Residential-focused Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction (IHFR) Programs such as Defensible Space Brush Chipping and Debris Removal Program, and the Defensible Space Fire Fuel Reduction Monthly Drop-off Program at Foothill College. Residents with property along evacuation road hardening projects are also invited to participate in the removal of hazardous fuelsvegetation abutting the roadway by participating in a Right of Entry (ROE) Program.

HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program. The District contracts with the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (FSC) to manage and operate the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program.

Program Benefits and Requirements:

1. The HIZ Assessment ~~examines~~ is conducted by a staff member on the property site to examine possible hazardous fire fuel risks within the defensible space of homes and other structures. Specifically, the assessment identifies hazardous vegetation and brush (fire fuels) and proposes steps to mitigate these risks to reduce destruction and damage to homes, buildings, and property during fire and wildfire events.

~~To incentivize residents~~The Program offers a rebate for implementing the HIZ Assessment recommendations. Residents are incentivized to act on this urgent life and safety concern, ~~strengthen~~ neighborhood resiliency, ~~by reducing risks of fire~~ and ~~reduce the costs to~~ residents for large vegetation mitigation efforts that create defensible space around the home and buildings, ~~the Program offers~~

~~matching rebates for implementation of the HIZ Assessment recommendations~~~~wildfire~~.

- a. Residents may apply for 50% reimbursement of the cost of implementing the eligible costs incurred for the completed implementation of qualifying HIZ vegetation mitigation recommendations for a rebate of up to \$3,000 per property, per calendar year. Structural and home hardening recommendations are supplied in an HIZ assessmentAssessment but are not rebate-eligible. To qualify for the Rebate Program, residents are required to use a licensed contractor for vegetation removal, brush cutting, and tree trimming. Tree removal does not qualify for a rebate. Trees are defined as saplings over 8 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).
 - a. ~~HIZ recommendations must be completed, and rebate requests must be submitted within 6 months of the HIZ Assessment.~~ If a resident is unable to complete the HIZ recommendations within the 6 month window due to extenuating circumstances, the resident may apply to FSC for an extension. A District representative will review the request and determine if a reasonable extension is warranted. The ruling by the District representative is final. If the District representative concludes that a resident missed the 6 month deadline and is not eligible for an extension, the resident will lose eligibility for the HIZ Rebate Program for the remainder of the calendar year. However, residents who do not receive rebates will still benefit from the HIZ Assessment service and are encouraged to implement the HIZ recommendations.
 - b. HIZ recommendations must be completed, and rebate requests must be submitted within 2 years of the HIZ Assessment.
 - b.c. Rebate Processing: Effective January 1, 2026, all rebate applications shall be submitted online. Residents shall provide the FSC withinclude after photos of all qualifying rebate-eligible items and itemized licensed contractor invoices to verify expenses. Once all invoices have been submitted to the application is approved, the District, in partnership with the FSC, the resident may request that will process the rebate be processedrequest. The FSCDistrict will process one rebate request per assessmentcalendar year.
2. Residents can learn more about the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program and register online: <https://www.defensiblespacereport.org/lah/address/requestcodehttps://www.lahcf.org/programs-for-residents/hiz-program/>

2.3. HIZ Assessment requests are scheduled on a first-come, first-serve-served basis, and are limited in number per month. Rebates are payable from FSC after verification by a District representative that the HIZ recommendations were implemented, and rebate requirements arewere satisfied. Rebates are subject to District approval and funding availability.

3.4. HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program services include:

- a. Specific and personalized property assessments and recommendations on how residents can create and maintain a 100-ft defensive space zone around their home and structures on their property,
- b. Resident education on hardening properties by identifying and removing hazardous brush and vegetation (fire fuels) to make properties more defensible in the event of a wildfire and

increasing fire safety for the neighborhood,

c. Resident education on hardening the home structure to mitigate damage from fire and wildfire.
Note – structure hardening and mitigations are not rebate-eligible.

e.d. Resident education on maintaining property hygiene once hazardous fire fuels are reduced or eliminated,

d.e. Resident education on resources for wildfire mitigation and District programs and resources, include:

- i. HIZ Assessments of resident's property,
- ii. ~~Matching HIZ~~ Rebate Program to encourage residents to implement the HIZ Assessment recommendations,
- iii. Monthly Defensible Space Brush Chipping and Debris Removal Program,
- iv. Defensible Space Fuel Reduction Monthly Drop-off Program at Foothill College,
- v. Emergency preparedness workshops and training for residents offered by the District in conjunction with Santa Clara County FireSafe Council and Santa Clara ~~County Fire Department~~,
~~County Fire Department~~,
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4.5. Activities that are eligible for the Rebate Program.

~~The HIZ Assessment will include recommendations on how to create defensible space and how to harden homes and structures on a property, both of which increase fire safety on a property. However, only defensible space hazardous fire fuel removal activities performed by a licensed contractor, that are within the 0 – 100ft. defensible space zone, are eligible for the rebate program. Tree removal is not eligible for the Rebate Program. Please review the defensible space diagram at the end of this Advisory.~~

Examples of **Rebate-eligible activities** include (this list is not exhaustive and more details for the specific recommendation will be provided in the Assessment):

- Cutting or removing annual grasses and weeds within the 100-ft zone
- Removing grass and weed clippings, leaf, and needle litter within the 100-ft zone

- Removing clippings, leaf and needle litter, or other vegetation debris from gutters, from porch surfaces, or from under porches and decks
- Limbing any trees with branches within 10 feet of chimney or stovepipe outlet, or limbs overhanging structures
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The ~~Integrated Hazardous Fuel~~Community Education & Risk Reduction ~~Programs (HIFR)(CERR) Program~~ may change and adapt as fire prevention measures change and new strategies, priorities, and best practices for fire fuel reduction are developed. **This Advisory is intended to be a living document that will be updated and revised as the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program process and operations develop.**

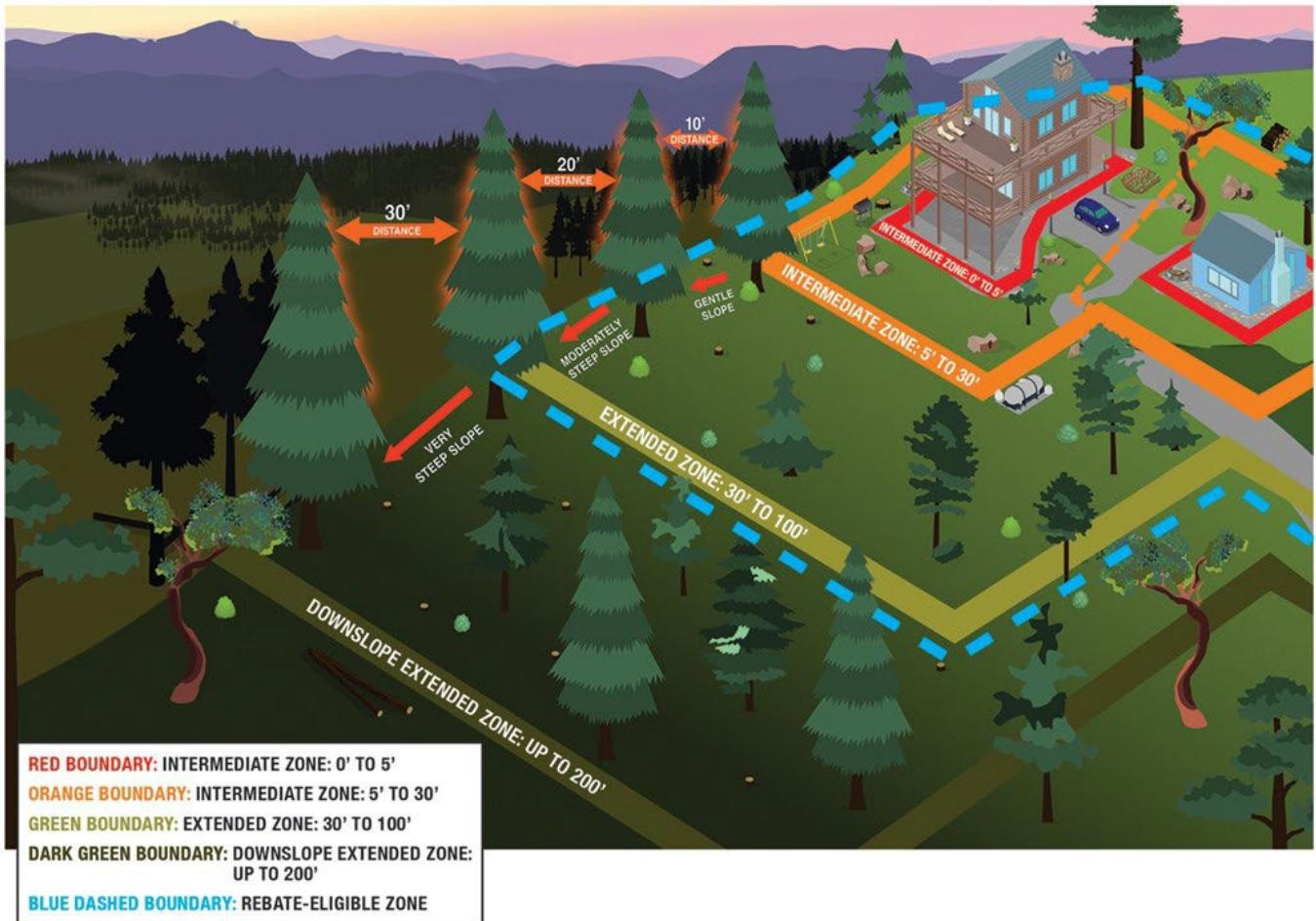
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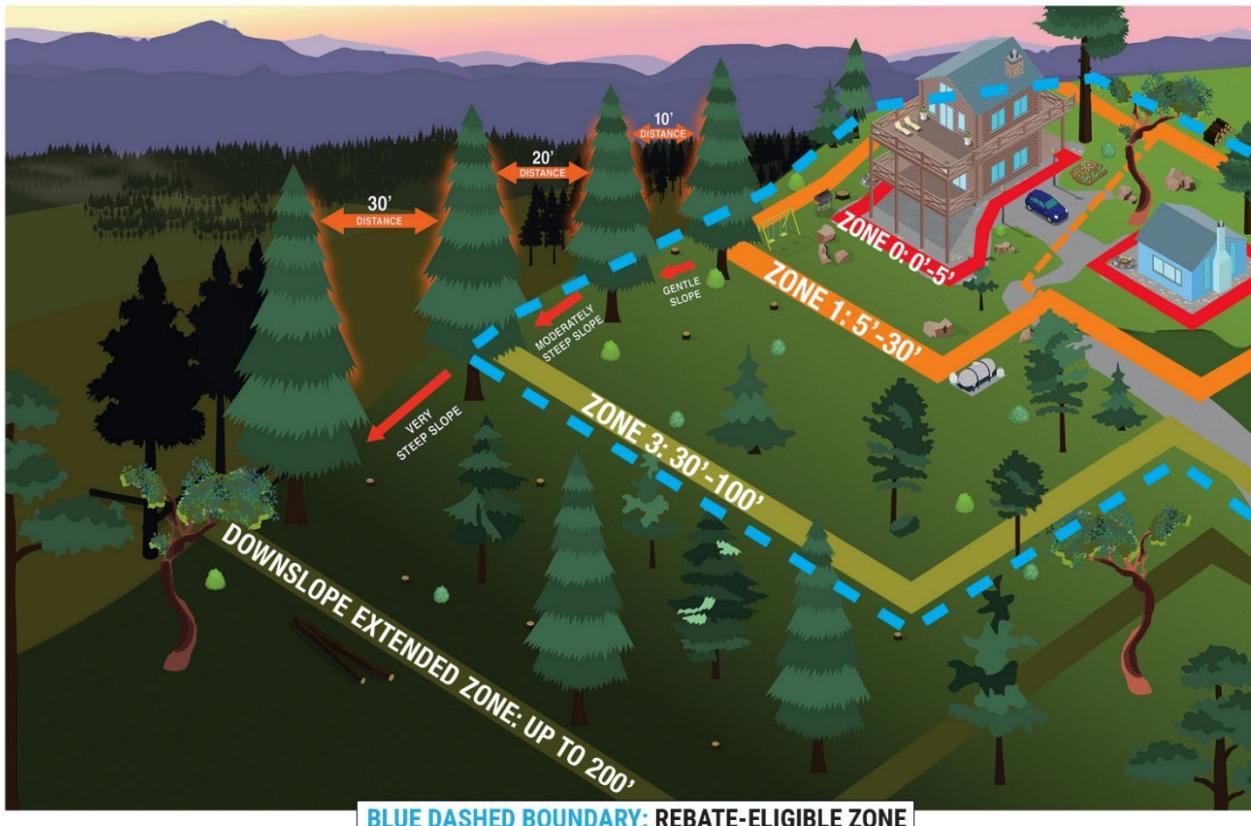
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