

Timber Creek Firewise Neighborhood Assessment

February 24, 2026

Jennifer and Doug Maines, Ralph Salisbury, Dennis Regan, and Sevilla Rhoads, representing the Timber Creek Firewise Community, and Steven Lord, Sisters – Camp Sherman Fire District Community Risk and Fire Specialist—met to share information about we can improve the fire resistance and resiliency of our neighborhood. This assessment will help us formulate a 3-year plan which Steven will submit on our behalf to become a recognized Firewise Neighborhood.

- **Zone Zero:** The Oregon State Fire Marshall’s Office recommends the area between zero and five feet from the home as the highest priority. The greatest risk to our homes and at the same time the easiest, most effective mitigation is to address embers blowing in over the outer defensible spaces and settling on flammable materials and plants in the space closest to the structure, which in turn can then ignite. Goal: no fuels in Zone Zero.
- **Mulch:**
 - Clear bark dust from within 10’ of structures. Replace with a 1” to 1½” thick layer of gravel. Aspen gravel is the same cost as bark.
 - Outside of the 10’ perimeter, small granule and composted bark dust is preferable to chunkier bark.
- **Foundations:**
 - Remove exposed house wrap and caulk underneath the lowest course of siding. Embers can blow underneath your house through these openings.
- **Foundation and eave vents:**
 - Clear debris (leaves, needles, dryer lint) from vent wells.
 - Most of our homes were built with 1/4” screen in the vents. Replace or overlay this with 1/8” mesh screen.
 - Sevilla R. offered that her handyman suggested buying bulk 1/8” screen which can be easily cut to size and pushed into the vent openings.
 - Steven L. suggested buying materials in bulk to take advantage of cost savings.
- **Propane tanks & service yards:**
 - **Goals:**
 - The ground under the propane tank and surrounding within 10’ from the home should be non-flammable paving, rock mulch, or bare dirt. (IBHS certification standard, which is becoming a requirement of Allstate Insurance).
 - The closest 5’ of fencing attached to the house should be non-flammable material (Oregon State Fire Marshall & Firewise USA).

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- Propane tanks do not catch fire, but they can expel gas like a blow torch if the valve is subject to impact, thus the recommendation for clear space and protection surrounding the tank.
- Timber Creek's obsolete CC&R's specified that "service yards" (enclosing propane tanks, trash cans, other storage and dog runs) be attached to the house and constructed of either clear cedar or siding to match the house. Chain link is prohibited. Nearly all of the homes in Timber Creek were built to this standard, and this is now a major issue to address throughout the neighborhood. We need to partner with the ARC to arrive at design solutions.
- Because metal panels are expensive, Steven L. suggested this as a more cost effective first step for service yards constructed of cedar fencing: Remove the cedar infill from the first 5' away from the house. This leaves the fir 2x4 framing, which is less flammable. Replace the infill with 1/8" metal screen. Alternatively, wrap the panel with 1/8" metal screen.
- For homes with fiber cement siding, such as Hardie Plank, the infill could be constructed of siding to match.
- There are fire retardant paints and coatings. Refer to a Whychus Canyon Estates chemist as resource.
- Trees & shrubs:
 - Beyond the 5' perimeter trees are recommended to be spaced 10' apart (Oregon Fire Marshall). This is a challenge for our neighborhood given the density of our lots.
 - Remove trees with dead middles.
 - It is no longer required in Sisters that a new tree must be planted to replace one that has been removed.
 - Prioritize limbing and clearing ladder fuels. The distance from the ground to the lowest limb—and the distance from the roof to the lowest overhanging limb—is more serious than needle drop.
 - Thin and/or prune shrubs with dead middles.
 - Sabrina R. offered this advice from her landscaper: When limbing, avoid cutting branches flush with the trunk. Sap running down the trunk is flammable.
 - When piles of leaves/needles on the ground, on roofs, and in gutters reach 2" thick they should be cleared.
- Landscaping choices:
 - Avoid:

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- Juniper and Blue Spruce Trees, which have flammable oils, and can send up flames 3 times the height of the tree.
- Barrel grass under trees, as it dries out and becomes ladder fuel.
- Consider:
 - Boxwoods are fire resistant in the 5'-30' defensible zone.
 - Maple trees in the 5'-30' defensible zone can block embers from blowing into the Zone Zero space. The drip edge should be at least 5' away from the structure.
 - Ponderosa Pines without ladder fuel understory are relatively safe. Fire carries up the tree and then goes out.
- Decks:
 - Avoid flammable construction materials.
 - Look at spacing between boards with an eye to what can fall through and how quickly it can accumulate.
 - Make sure there is skirting to block embers from blowing underneath. But also plan for access through the skirting to regularly rake out leaves and needles when they approach 2" deep.
 - Avoid placing outdoor furniture and barbecue grills against the house.
 - Pay attention to flammable cushions and barbecue grill covers.
 - When a fire is approaching or when you are going on vacation, take in any furniture and your grill. Roll up or take in outdoor shades.