

Rebates help homeowners pay for creation of defensible space

BY [ADAM JENSEN](#),

The view from the back deck of Jesse and Sondra Garner's Del Norte Street home provides a nearly unobstructed view of Angora Ridge, and a clear reminder of the importance of preparing for wildfire.

The couple recently completed a variety of measures on their property to come into compliance with California Public Resources Code Section 4291 - the state's defensible-space law.

And they were paid to do it.

The Garners were the first homeowners in the Lake Valley Fire Protection District to receive a rebate check under a program administered by the Nevada Fire Safe Council. The council operates in both Nevada and California in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The checks provide reimbursement for half the cost of implementing defensible-space measures up to \$1,000 and are available to South Shore residents in the Lake Valley Fire Protection District and the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

"That incentive made us move forward a little bit quicker," said Jesse Garner, surveying a newly fire-resistant backyard.

The money paid for about a third of the \$3,205 the Garners spent to remove five large trees from their property, but many of the critical steps involved in creating defensible space - such as clearing pine needles from roofs and gutters, limbing trees, pruning bushes and placing woodpiles 30 feet from structures - don't require outside help, said Jessica Mahnken, project coordinator with the Nevada Fire Safe Council.

Nearly 300 rebate vouchers have been issued in the basin, and more than 50 residences now have defensible space with help of the program, according to a statement from the Fire Safe Council.

About half of the 200 rebates available in the Lake Valley Fire Protection District still are available, Mahnken said.

A report released in May by the California Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission includes several recommendations related to increasing the number of properties in the Lake Tahoe Basin that have defensible space.

The fire prevention measures are especially important during the initial attack phase of a firefight, when resources may be limited, said Lake Valley Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Michael.

"Your house has to be able to stand alone," Michael said. "That's what defensible space is."



- Jim Grant / Tahoe Daily Tribune



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