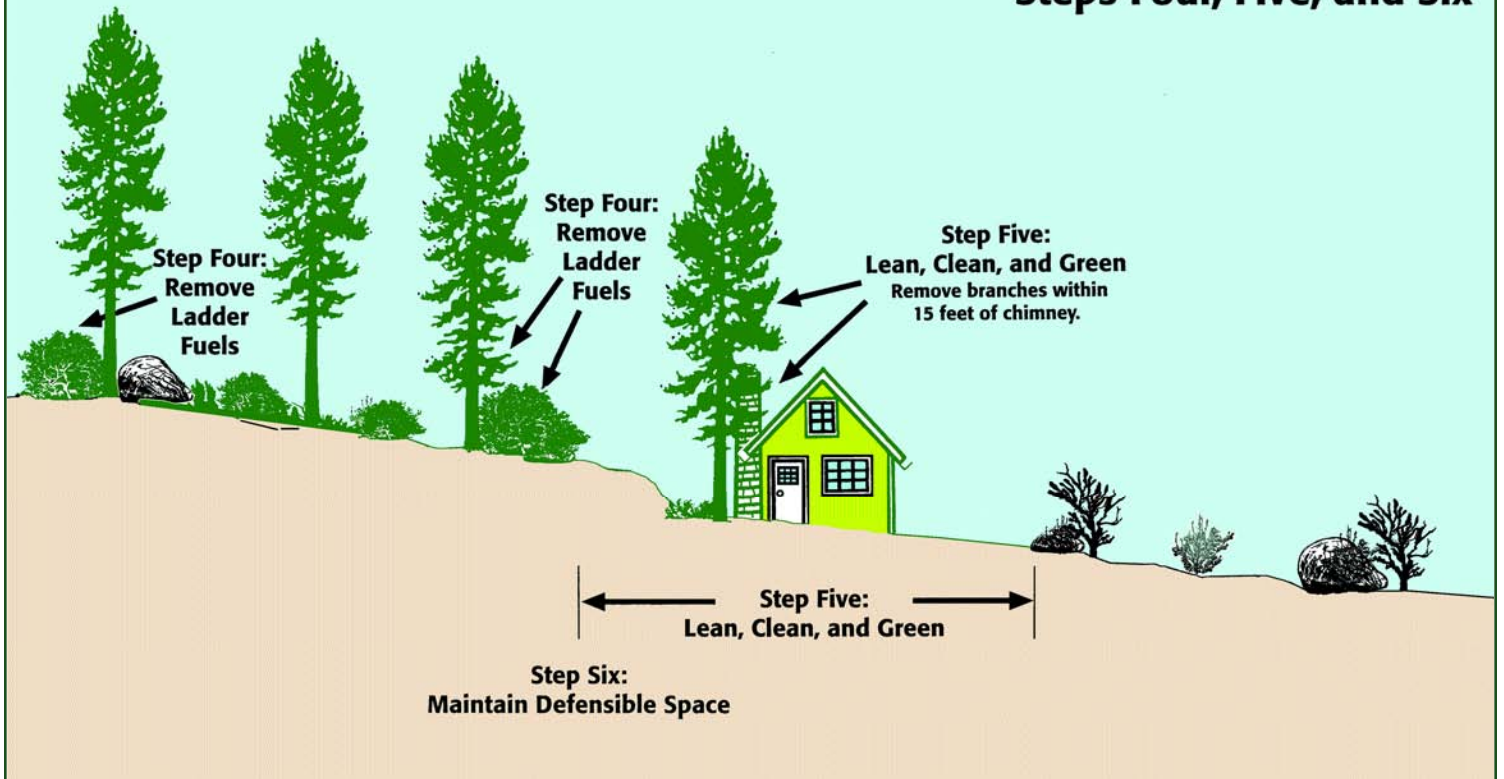


Steps Four, Five, and Six



STEP FOUR:

ARE THERE LADDER FUELS PRESENT WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED DEFENSIBLE SPACE AREA?

Vegetation is often present at varying heights, similar to the rungs of a ladder. Under these conditions, flames from fuels burning at ground level, such as a thick layer of pine needles, can be carried to shrubs which can ignite still higher fuels like tree branches. Vegetation that allows a fire to move from lower growing plants to taller ones is referred to as “ladder fuel.” The ladder fuel problem can be corrected by providing a separation between the vegetation layers.

Within the defensible space area, a vertical separation of three times the height of the lower fuel layer is recommended. For example, if a shrub growing adjacent to a large tree is three feet tall, the recommended separation distance would be 9 feet ($3 \text{ ft shrub height} \times 3 = 9 \text{ feet}$). This could be accomplished by removing the lower tree branches, reducing the height of the shrub, or both. A maximum height of 18” for all shrubs within 30’ is recommended.

