Glossary

Brush blade. A blade with "teeth" that allows brush to be uprooted and piled without also moving large quantities of topsoil to the pile.

Defensible Space. The natural and landscaped area around a structure that has been maintained and designed to reduce fire danger. This defensible space reduces the risk that fire will spread from the surroundings to the structure and provides firefighters access and a safer area to defend it from. Firefighters sometimes do not attempt protecting structures without adequate defensible space, for personnel safety and their effort less likely to succeed (adapted from Wikipedia).

Fire behavior. Fire behavior means its rate of spread (in feet/hour) and its intensity (that is, how hot it burns and how long its flame is).

Fire intensity and duration. Intensity refers to the amount of energy released by the fire, typically measured as flame length. Duration refers to the length of the period of combustion. Densely arranged fuels, such as chips, and larger fuels such as large logs, often have slower rates of fire spread than fine, loosely arranged fuels, but have greater intensity and duration due to the larger amount of fuel.

Fire severity. Fire severity describes the effects that wildfire has on soil, plants, fuel, and watersheds. Fire severity is determined by either visually estimating or measuring damage.

Fire-resistant forest. A forest that is resistant to, and unlikely to experience, a damaging wildfire. In many cases, fire-resistant forests have characteristics such as low levels of surface and ladder fuels, separation between tree crowns, and large, thick-barked trees that allow them to survive surface fires without significant mortality, and that make initiation of crown fires unlikely.

Fuel profile. The amount and arrangement of surface, ladder, and crown fuels. A forest's fuel profile has a major influence on fire behavior, along with weather and topography.

Holdover fires. A fire that smolders for days or weeks, then springs to life with higher temperatures and/or winds. Holdover fires are most common in slash piles that contain a significant amount of soil. It is always recommended to use a brush blade when creating a slash pile with equipment.

Ladder fuels. Small trees, brush, lower limbs of large trees, and other live and dead fuels that allow a fire to climb from ground level into the tree canopy.

Pump chance. A pond or creek that provides access to water for fire-fighting.

Resistance to Control. The effort needed to suppress a wildfire.

Surface fuel. Combustible material on the forest floor.

Thinning from below. An approach to thinning that removes primarily smaller, less vigorous trees (typically focusing on trees in the suppressed and intermediate crown classes) while retaining larger, more vigorous trees.

Vegetation mosaic. A pattern of vegetation occurring across the landscape, in which patches of vegetation occur in a variety of different stages and conditions, side by side. For example, a patch of older trees may occur next to a patch of younger trees and an open area. In landscapes in the western U.S. that historically experienced frequent wildfire, forests typically occurred in such a patchy mosaic, resulting in discontinuous fuels. Following decades of fire exclusion, many of these same forests now have more continuous layers of fuels, and are thus more likely to sustain and spread a high severity wildfire.