

# Defensible Space Saves Home from Wildfire

## Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

### *Navajo County, Arizona*

**Navajo County, AZ** - The home of Mrs. Lois Trimble, which she and her husband have owned since 1969, is located in the Pinedale area, Navajo, County, Arizona, just 10 miles NW of Show Low. They built their house over the years and it became their primary residence in 1981. The entire area around this home was burned by the Rodeo-Chediski Fire that swept through the community late June of 2002.

Mrs. Trimble tells the following story, "The fire started on Monday. On Tuesday we were told that the fire was out. Wednesday morning, ash was raining down all around us. My son called and told us that the fire had exploded, we looked and saw it coming over the ridge. We were told to evacuate; we had one hour. Because we had experienced this before, five years ago, we knew exactly what to grab; important papers, some food, clothes and photo albums. My husband is an invalid so my daughter and I had to do it all." They were evacuated to the town of Eager and sheltered there until it was safe to return.

The only building which survived the fire was their home. Out buildings, vehicles and boats on the property were totally destroyed. Their home, while not damaged by fire, had smoke and soot inside and was not immediately habitable. They are temporarily staying in a family owned trailer.

Altogether, the Trimbles own ten acres of forested land. Mr. Trimble began spreading decomposed granite around the house and yard to make raking and removing pine needles easier. He keeps the pine needles clear because of the fire hazard they pose to their home. The decomposed granite also helps to keep the area clean after rain and absorbs any runoff. Approximately 30 to 50 feet of land around the house, including a black top area for parking, has been spread with the decomposed granite. The Trimbles, in effect, created a defensible space around their home. Trees, shrubs and a garden area close to the house and within the cleared area did not burn. The fire leveled all of the neighbors homes and out buildings as well as burning the trees in the forest.

The current market value of the Trimble property is approximately \$200,000. The cost of one dump truck load of decomposed granite is \$120.00. Mr. Trimble has used four truck loads of material at a cost of less than \$500.00. Clearly, the low investment of time and materials has proven very effective to protect their home from this devastating wildfire.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IX**

State: **Arizona**

County: **Navajo County**

#### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Wildfire**

Activity/Project Type: **Vegetation Management**

Structure Type: **Wood Frame**

Activity/Project Start Date: **07/2002**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**  
Funding Source: **Homeowner**  
Funding Recipient: **Property Owner - Residential**  
Funding Recipient Name: **Mr. & Mrs. Trimble**

### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$500.00 (Estimated)**

### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From  
Federal Disaster? **Unknown**  
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**  
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**  
Year First Tested: **2002**  
Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

### Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.wildfirenews.com/>**  
Reference URL 2: **<http://www.dem.state.az.us/>**

Show Main Points

### Attachments

*No Attachments are available*