

WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY PLANNING

WILDLAND FIRE POTENTIAL:

Wildfires are a natural part of Colorado's varied forest ecosystems. Many rural communities are located in areas historically prone to frequent natural wildfires. Living in the wildland requires more self-reliance than living in urban areas. It may take longer for firefighters to reach your area. Firefighters always do their best to protect residents, but ultimately, **it is YOUR responsibility to protect your life, family, animals and property from wildfire.**

PREPARING MAKES SENSE:

Taking actions to reduce fire hazards can increase your safety and help protect your property. Here are some steps you can take increase the safety of your family and home during a wildfire, and to protect your property.

EMERGENCY PLANNING:

Take the time now to plan for taking care of yourself and your family during a wildfire emergency. Wildland fire events may occur quickly and you may not receive a warning. You may need to take action on your own initiative to evacuate.

- If you are unsure, evacuate first and only then try to call for information. **DON'T WAIT – EVACUATE!**
- Planning before a disaster can help your family evacuate and reunite faster.
- Have at least one, preferably two, safe meeting locations for family members after you have evacuated.
- Practice moving to your safe locations; choose different routes to get there.
- Have an out-of-state contact for everyone to call or text to check in.
- Even if you are not directly affected by a wildland fire, your access and utility services may be cut off.

For more information regarding emergency planning go to: <https://www.ready.gov/> and the American Red Cross website: <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/be-red-cross-ready>

CREATING DEFENSIBLE SPACE: The 30 foot area around a home that has been modified to reduce fire ignition hazards to give it a fighting chance against an approaching wildfire is defined as "Zone 1". Creating defensible space also reduces the chance of a structure fire spreading to the surrounding forest and other homes.

- If you do keep any trees in this zone, consider them part of the structure and extend the distance of the entire defensible space accordingly. Rake needle or duff layers deeper than 2 inches at least 3 feet away from the base of trees. Prune all tree branches from ground level up to a height of 10 feet above ground or up to 1/3 the height of the tree, whichever is less. Do not prune further up because it could jeopardize the health of the tree.
- Remove any branches that overhang or touch the roof, and remove all fuels within 10 feet of a chimney.
- Remove all pine needles and other debris from the roof, deck and gutters. Rake all pine needles and other flammable debris away from the foundation and at least 10 feet away from all decks and structures.
- Prune and maintain trees and shrubs to prevent excessive growth. Also, remove all dead branches, stems and leaves within and below the plant. Mow grass and weeds to a height of 6 inches or less only on days with high humidity or after recent moisture to reduce the risk of starting an unwanted fire. Do not plant shrubs or other plants under windows or next to foundation vents. Decorative rock creates an attractive, easily maintained, nonflammable ground cover.
- Dispose of slash and wood chips. Do not store firewood or other combustible materials anywhere in this zone. Keep firewood at least 30 feet away from structures, and uphill if possible.
- Screen attic, roof, eave and foundation vents; chimneys and under decks with 1/8-inch or smaller metal mesh. Do not use areas under decks for storage.
- Post signs at the end of the driveway with your last name and house number that are noncombustible, reflective and easily visible to emergency responders.
- Make sure that the driveway is cleared for access by fire and emergency equipment.

For more information on protecting your home from wildfire, creating Defensible Space and Emergency Preparedness and Planning go to the following websites:

- **Defensible Space:** <http://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/protect-your-home-property-forest-from-wildfire/>
- **Ready, Set, Go!:** www.wildlandfirersg.org
- **The Colorado State Forest Service:** www.csfs.colostate.edu
- **CSFS wildfire-related publications:** www.csfs.colostate.edu/pages/wf-publications.html

- Community Wildfire Protection Planning: www.csfs.colostate.edu/pages/community-wf-protection-planning.html
- Colorado's "Are You Fire-Wise?" information: www.csfs.colostate.edu/pages/wf-protection.html
- Fire Adapted Communities: www.fireadapted.org