

Preparing for the 2007 Wildland Fire Season

Due to Colorado's arid climate and fire-dependent forests, Park County is particularly susceptible to wildfires. By creating a wildfire defensible zone, homes are more protected from this naturally occurring phenomenon and the chance of spreading wildfires is greatly reduced. If you are a homeowner and you are interested in protecting your home from wildfires, follow the Colorado State Forest Service guidelines for being FireWise (www.firewise.org). While you may not be able to accomplish all the measures outlined, each will increase your home's safety and survival during a wildfire. Start with the easiest and least expensive actions. Begin your work closest to your house and move outward. Keep working on the more difficult items until you have completed your entire project.

Defensible Space

Your first line of defense against wildfire is to create and maintain a defensible space around your home. This does not mean your landscape has to be barren. A defensible space is an area, either man-made or natural, where the vegetation is modified to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire. Defensible space also provides room for firefighters to do their jobs and helps protect the forest from being involved should a structure fire occur. Your house is more likely to withstand a wildfire if grasses, brush, trees, and other common forest fuels are managed to reduce a fire's intensity. By following simple fire safety steps, your home will have a chance to survive while firefighters work to bring the wildfire under control. Remember, a fire department's effectiveness in battling a wildfire starts with **YOU!** Please see the following page for a few key steps to creating a defensible zone.

Trees & Shrubs

Many naturally occurring plants in our area are highly flammable during the summer and can fuel a wildfire, causing it to spread rapidly. There should be a break in the continuity of any fuels right next to any building. This should be 18-24 inches wide, depending on the height of the grass or weeds. Removing flammable native vegetation and replacing it with low-growing, fire-resistive plants is one of the easiest and most effective ways to create a defensible space. Select landscape vegetation based on fire resistance and ease of maintenance, as well as visual enhancement of your property. In general, fire-resistive plants:

- * grow close to the ground
- * are easily maintained and pruned
- * grow without accumulating dead branches, needles, leaves or other debris
- * have a low sap or resin content
- * are drought-tolerant in some cases

Access

When a wildfire threatens, the first few minutes are the most critical for saving your home. Firefighting personnel must be able to immediately locate and safely travel to your home in order to effectively protect it. Street signs and house addresses must be clearly posted, and roads must be able to accommodate busy traffic. At the same time that fire engines and other emergency equipment are trying to drive into your area, you must be able to escape in your car with your family and valuable personal possessions.

Information provided by the Colorado State Forest Service

COUNTYWIDE SLASH DAYS

Park County has designated sites this year for residents to take forest cuttings and slash for disposal.

June 23-24th behind the Loaf and Jug on 43a in Bailey
June 23-24th at North West Fire Station #2 off Hwy 285 in Fairplay

Other fire districts within the county may have a system in place to dispose of slash year-round.
Please check with your local fire protection district for more information.

If you need assistance figuring out where and what to thin please call your local fire district or the Colorado State Forest Service.

PREPARING A HOUSE FOR WILDLAND FIRE SEASON



Photo courtesy of Utah Fire Info.gov

- 1) **Remove dead or overhanging branches.** During the windy conditions that exist during a wildland fire, flames, sparks and firebrands could travel from the tree to the roof of a structure. Trim all branches which extend over roof eaves and remove branches within 15 feet of chimneys.
- 2) **Remove leaf accumulation from your yard.** Leaf accumulation provides fuel for a wildland fire.
- 3) **Remove leaf clutter from your roof and gutters.** During a wildland fire, leaves on the roof and/or gutters could be ignited by flying embers.
- 4) **Remove tall, dry grasses.** Tall, dry grasses provide a path for fire that can lead directly to a house. Mow dry grass and weeds to a height of six inches or less for a distance of 30 feet from all structures.
- 5) **Remove “ladder fuels”.** Prune tree limbs so the lowest is between 6’ – 10’ from the ground. Fire burning through tall, dry grass could ignite these limbs and climb to the top of the tree with relative ease.
- 6) **Check your generator and/or hose to be sure it is in good repair.** Refuel garden equipment carefully. Yard equipment needs annual maintenance and proper fueling. Hoses develop leaks and deteriorate with age and exposure. During wildland fire season, fuel your lawn mower properly – away from dry, flammable grasses.
- 7) **Prune bushes and shrubs regularly.** Remove excess growth as well as dead leaves and branches to decrease their flammability, and the threat they could pose during a wildland fire.
- 8) **Maintain the defensible space annually** by removing debris, shrubs and other vegetation which has accumulated during the year.

Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.