



Branching Out

A Forest Stewardship e-newsletter

Summer 2006

Brought to you by:



Welcome

Fire Ready connects property owners and communities with their landscapes through services that enhance forest aesthetics and safety. We provide wildfire protection and professional forestry services. This newsletter seeks to enhance the understanding of wildfire preparation and forest stewardship.

Living In Wildfire Country

Steps You Can Take Now to Protect Your Home and Property from Wildfire

The forests of Colorado are overgrown with dense vegetation due to years of fire suppression, and significant growth in past decades. Insect epidemics continue to kill trees, further increasing the fire hazard. Fortunately, there are steps we can take to protect our homes, our property and ourselves. As responsible stewards of the land, property owners should prepare for wildfire. As a benefit, the steps we take to prepare our property for fire can also increase property value and accessibility, improve wildlife habitat and restore forest health.

Creating defensible space is one of the first steps we can take. Defensible space is a circle of protection around a home in a forested area, where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the intensity of a wildfire as it approaches a home. A common misconception is that creating a defensible space means clear-cutting all vegetation and trees. Fortunately, this is not the case. Wildfire risk can be dramatically reduced while maintaining privacy screening and aesthetic beauty.

The risks and impacts of wildfire are increased in forested subdivisions because of the density of homes and limited access roads. Firefighting resources are stretched thin during a wildfire event. There are not enough firefighters to defend every home. Homes without defensible space place firefighters at unreasonable risk and may have to withstand a wildfire alone. Fire prevention should be evaluated as an entire subdivision, taking into account factors like access, safe zones for firefighters and multiple exits.

A Community Association can offer positive leadership, and a proactive approach to reducing the hazards of wildfire. Some important steps to consider:

- 1) Form a fire prevention committee.
- 2) Launch an awareness campaign for residents.
- 3) Research local education efforts, and ask for assistance with outreach.
- 4) Find out what assistance the Colorado State Forest Service can offer.
- 5) Research efforts of other local forested subdivisions.
- 6) Develop a wildfire evacuation plan for the subdivision.
- 7) Conduct a subdivision-wide wildfire danger assessment.
- 8) Lot-specific information can be collected and sent to non-resident owners.
- 9) Install and maintain all street signs for easy identification by emergency vehicles.
- 10) Encourage residents to install clearly visible house numbers.
- 11) Evaluate subdivision roads for evacuation and emergency vehicle access.
- 12) Clear a 3-foot area around hydrants for Fire Department access.
- 13) Install a fire danger sign at the entrance that identifies the current fire risk.
- 14) Reduce vegetation under utility lines and around the base of poles.
- 15) Install strategic fuel breaks and reduce vegetation in common areas.
- 16) Hold an annual "Defensible Space Maintenance" day.
- 17) Identify a place for a community slash pile. (Slash refers to trimmed tree branches and other downed vegetation.) Make sure to follow all suggested precautions with slash, so that you don't increase fire hazards or further exacerbate insect problems, such as with pine beetles.
- 18) Continue education efforts year-round, before the crisis of fire season arrives.



The risk of wildfire is something that we live with everyday when we choose to make our home in a forested area. However, with preparation, you can dramatically reduce the risk that wildfire poses to your home, property and community. Two of the most important ways to do this are by creating defensible space around your home, and returning your forest to a healthy state by reducing density. Taking these steps also creates ecological and financial benefits, as wildlife habitat and forest health improves, and property values have been shown to increase. Community Associations can provide key leadership in addressing community-wide preparation issues.

“You can create defensible space on your one acre and provide a better chance of your home surviving a wildfire. But when multiple landowners are committed, it provides much greater protection during a wildfire event. Reducing wildfire risk needs to be a concentrated, community effort.” -- Dan Ochocki, District Forester, Colorado State Forest Service.

When the Wildfire Comes . . .

Develop a Wildfire Evacuation Plan

Fire-Ready homes are more likely to survive a wildfire. But when a catastrophic wildfire is threatening your area, there are additional steps you can take. If you see a fire approaching your home, call 911.

Be Ready

Develop a communication plan, with all family members. Provide caregivers (such as teachers, childcare providers) with emergency contact information and a meeting place.

Prepare to Evacuate

Dress to prevent burns. Wear long pants, cotton or wool long-sleeve shirts or jackets, and gloves. Do not wear short-sleeve shirts or clothing made of synthetic fabrics.

Contact your neighbors and tell them about the fire.

Place your contact information in an obvious note on the counter or refrigerator, so firefighters can contact you.

Park the car in the garage, facing out with windows closed and keys in the ignition. Do NOT leave it running.

Close the garage door, but leave it unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door opener.

Place documents and family mementos in the car ready for quick departure. Confine pets to one room, in carriers if possible.

Take personal items for a minimum of three days, including computer hard-drive, cell phone charger, address book, and insurance policy information.

Lock the door.

Outside and Inside Your Home

Cover windows, attic openings, and vents with fire-resistant material. Shut off propane or natural gas valves.

Remove gasoline and barbecues from property.

Attach garden hoses to spigots and place them so they can reach any area of your house.

Fill trashcans and buckets with water and place them where firefighters can find them.

Place a ladder against the house on the side opposite the approaching fire to help firefighters get onto your roof.

Close all windows and doors. Remove curtains or drapes. Turn on porch lights to make the house more visible.

Evacuating

When asked to evacuate, do so.

Let authorities know of neighbors who might need assistance evacuating.

Use preplanned routes, away from the approaching fire front.

If you are trapped by fire while evacuating in your car, park in an area clear of vegetation, close all vehicle windows and vents, cover yourself with a blanket or jacket and lie on the floor.

If you are trapped by fire while evacuating on foot, select an area clear of vegetation along a road, or lie in the road ditch. Cover any exposed skin with a jacket or blanket.



After the Fire Passes

Check the roof immediately, extinguishing embers.
Check the yard for burning woodpiles, trees, fence posts, and other materials.
Keep the doors and windows closed.
Continue rechecking your home and yard for embers for at least 12 hours.

For more information, visit these websites:

Red Cross—www.redcross.org
FEMA—www.fema.gov
Fire Ready—www.fireready.com

Pets and Livestock

Tips to keep animals safe during a wildfire:
Place stickers on house doors and barns, to alert fire personnel. Provide muzzles, handling gloves, catchnets, and animal restraints for a successful rescue.
If you are forced to evacuate, do not leave your pets, horses, or livestock behind.
Securely fasten an up-to-date identification tag on the animal's collar or halter, and mark livestock.
Carry a photo of your pet for identification purposes.
Be sure to pack a week's worth of food, water, and other supplies such as cat litter and medication.
For more information, contact the American Veterinary Medical Association—www.avma.org

Beating Back The Bugs

A Look at Forest Pests

You've probably seen them . . . brown trees dotting the hillsides of Colorado. Many of these trees are dead or dying from forest pest infestations. These infestations have occurred historically in cycles, but current beetle populations are proving to be unusually damaging to our forests—and their numbers are on the rise. As property owners and good forest stewards, we can help slow the spread of these forest pests, and in the process protect our cherished individual trees, the value of our property, and the overall health of the forest. According to Dave Leatherman, of the Colorado State Forest Service, "Now is a good time to be a bark beetle in Colorado because most of our native forests are coniferous. These forests are (in general) dense, old, and stressed."

What's Wrong with my Tree? Evergreens lose some needles every year. Generally speaking:

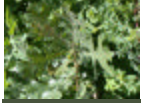
- If the interior needles are fading, this is normal leaf fall.
- If the whole tree is fading, the cause is probably bark beetles, root disease, or a lack of moisture.
- If the exterior needles are fading, the cause may be tip moth or twig beetle.

Many other forest insect and disease conditions exist. Contact a Fire Ready professional or State Forester to identify your specific tree condition.

A community-wide program of prevention and beetle population reduction is necessary in areas of high-value conifers. Solutions may include thinning and pesticide application. Preventative actions should concentrate in areas surrounding beetle-killed trees.

- 1) Consult professional Fire Ready foresters to correctly identify trees and specific forest-pests.
- 2) Determine an appropriate method of action for your trees.
- 3) Work with neighbors to reduce beetle populations landscape-wide.
- 4) Remove infested trees before the beetles fly.
- 5) Properly dispose of all parts of the infested trees (research suggested methods).
- 6) Preventative tree-spraying for beetle control can be effective in trees not yet infested.
- 7) Thin trees to improve overall health and vigor of the forest.
- 8) If appropriate for forest health, develop a re-planting plan for trees lost.

There are more than twenty species of forest-pests in Colorado, affecting nearly all types of evergreen trees. Consult a professional forester to learn more about how to be a good forest steward and protect your property.



“Are You Ready?”

Complimentary Short Film Available

Fire Ready is pleased to announce the release of an educational short film in DVD format. The “Are You Ready?” short film addresses issues of wildfire preparedness and forest stewardship. Six stand-alone chapters include: “The Human Cost of Wildfire”, “A Brief History”, “The Wildland-Urban Interface”, “Fuel Reduction and Defensible Space” and “The Fire Ready Approach”.

These DVD’s are available at no charge as part of Fire Ready’s ongoing effort to educate the public about the need to proactively care for our forests and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires. Individuals who are interested in sharing this information with friends, family, colleagues, or (perhaps most importantly!) their neighbors, should contact their local Fire Ready office, email info@fireready.com or call 970-749-7267. To locate the nearest Fire Ready office, please visit www.fireready.com and click on “Office Locations”. This short film is also available online at www.fireready.com.

Fire Ready would like to thank the firefighters, foresters, ecologists, and homeowners that contributed to this short film, and would like to extend a special thank you to Brent Notbohm of Mirror Cinema Products for his expertise and excellence in videography.

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A Quarterly Forest Stewardship e-newsletter

Fire Ready is electronically offering this e-newsletter four times a year, as a complimentary way to provide forest stewardship information to our valuable clients and contacts. To subscribe, please send an email to info@fireready.com. To unsubscribe, please send an email with “unsubscribe” in the subject line to info@fireready.com.