

# Larimer County Wildfire Safety Tips

## Are You *FIREWISE*?

*Wildfires are a major concern in the mountain areas throughout Colorado.*

According to a recent study, Larimer County was ranked as one of the most hazardous counties in the state with respect to wildfire. As more forested lands are developed and recreational uses increase, the potential for loss of life and property caused by wildfire is an ever-increasing concern.

Protecting your home from wildfire is YOUR responsibility. Don't assume firefighters can save your structure or protect your property.

Advance planning and knowing how to protect buildings in these areas can lessen the devastation of a wildfire. When designing or building your home, consider choosing a **FIREWISE LOCATION**, developing a **DEFENSIBLE SPACE** around your structure, and selecting fire-resistive **BUILDING MATERIALS**.

### Choose a *FIREWISE* location

- Evaluate the building site. Choose a site away from heavily vegetated areas. Build on the most level portion of the land. Avoid natural chimneys or draws in the terrain. Set your structure a minimum of 30 feet back from the ridge or cliff; increase the distance if the home will be higher than one story.
- Provide easy access for emergency vehicles. A steep, narrow or winding driveway can impede access for larger emergency vehicles.
- Clearly post your address, using numbers that contrast with their background, so firefighters and Emergency Medical Personnel can find you in an emergency.
- Ensure address is visible from both directions and keep brush and trees cut back so that the address stands out.

### Create and maintain a *FIREWISE* environment around your home.

Create a **DEFENSIBLE SPACE** around your home and structures on your property. This does not mean your landscape has to be barren. Defensible space is an area - either man-made or natural - where the vegetation is modified and maintained to slow the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire. It also creates an area for fire suppression operations to occur and helps protect the forest from becoming involved should a structure fire occur.

- 1) Thin tree and brush cover
- 2) Dispose of slash and debris left from thinning
- 3) remove dead limbs, leaves and other litter
- 4) Stack firewood away from home

- 5) Maintain greenbelt
- 6) Mow dry grasses and weeds
- 7) Prune branches to 10' above the ground
- 8) Trim branches
- 9) Clean roof and gutters
- 10) Reduce density of surrounding forest

For further information or assistance in designing a defensible space around your home, contact the Larimer County Wildfire Safety Coordinator at (970) 498-7718 or your local fire jurisdiction.

### Design and build ***FIREWISE*** structures

- When wildfire strikes, a structure's roof is its greatest weakness. Using class A or B roofing materials, such as asphalt shingles, slate or clay tile, or metal will reduce the danger.
- Use construction materials that are fire-resistive or non-combustible whenever possible.
- Minimize the size and number of windows on the side of the house that would most likely be exposed to a wildfire, typically the downhill side.
- Multi-pane glass provides more protection from radiant heat than single pane glass. Tempered glass should be used for picture windows, sliding doors and other large glass areas.
- Walls should be constructed with fire-resistive materials from the ground up to the roof overhang.
- Locate propane tanks either on the downhill side of the structure or on the same contour. Use a minimum Class III flame spread siding material. Stone, brick and stucco are best.
- Cover exterior attic, soffit and underfloor vents with ¼ inch wire mesh to prevent sparks from entering your home.
- Keep areas under decks vegetation-free by using a fabric weed barrier.

### **When Wildfire Occurs**

If you see a wildfire, call **911**. Don't assume that someone else has already called. Describe the location of the fire, speak slowly and clearly, and answer any questions asked by the dispatcher.

## **What if a fire occurs near your home?**

If a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your radio for updated reports and evacuation information. If your home becomes threatened, you may be contacted by a fire or law enforcement official and advised to evacuate.

- Wear protective clothing. This includes a cotton long-sleeved shirt or jacket, pants and sturdy shoes. Use a handkerchief to provide minimum protection for the lungs from smoke and hot gases.
- Ensure your family's safety. If you are able, locate and evacuate your pets but do not jeopardize your life. If you have livestock, let them loose by opening gates or cutting fences.
- Know where safe areas are within your subdivision. Contact your local fire department for assistance in determining safe areas. Typically, meadows, rock outcrops and roads may provide safe areas.
- If time allows, take a disaster kit containing drinking water, change of clothes for each member of the family, a blanket or sleeping bag for each person, first aid kit with any prescription medications, emergency tools including a radio and flashlight, extra set of car keys, and credit cards or cash.
- Know all emergency escape routes and have a pre-planned travel route. Don't panic. Drive slowly and safely. Turn on headlights to increase your visibility to other traffic in smoky conditions.

**For all emergencies  
dial 911 immediately**

## Home protection tips

In a major wildfire, it may be physically impossible for your local fire department to provide enough resources to protect your home. If you have time, you may want to take the following steps to help protect you home.

Do not jeopardize your life! No material item is worth a life. Conditions in a wildfire can change very quickly.

### *If time allows:*

- Place combustible items 50 feet away from house. This includes lawn furniture, umbrellas and tarp coverings.
- Close or cover outside attic, eaves and basement vents. This will reduce the possibility of sparks blowing into hidden areas within the house. Close window shutters.
- Connect a garden hose to an outside faucet so it can reach any place on the house.
- Place a ladder against the roof of the house opposite the side of the approaching fire.
- Shut off gas at meter or at propane tank.
- Park your car in the garage, facing out. Close the windows, but do not lock the doors. . Close garage door but leave unlocked. Disconnect the automatic garage door opener.
- Close all windows and doors, but do not lock them.
- Close all doors inside the house to block circulation of air and movement of fire.
- Turn on all exterior lights. This will make the house visible in heavy smoke or at night.
- Take down light weight curtains and close heavy weight drapes. Move overstuffed furniture away from windows and glass doors. These may ignite through radiant heat.

For additional information on wildfire hazards and what your can do to reduce these hazards, contact the Larimer County Wildfire Safety Coordinator, your local fire protection district or one of the other agencies listed below.

Larimer County  
Wildfire Safety Coordinator  
970-498-7718  
Emergency Services  
970-498-5300  
970-498-5301

Poudre Fire Authority  
970-221-6570

Colorado State Forest Service Fort Collins District  
970-491-8660