

WILDFIRE PREPARATION TIPS FROM LAKE DILLON FIRE



A fact of living in the high country is the annual threat of wildfire. Lake Dillon Fire urges residents here to take steps now to be prepared in case of a major wildfire in Summit County. First, prepare yourself and your family with an evacuation kit. Second, document your valuable possessions and check that your insurance is adequate for the possibility of losing everything. Third, carve defensible space around your home and harden it from embers.

When wildfire strikes, you may have only minutes to escape. At that point, you don't have time to think about what you want to take with you, much less time to better protect your home and possessions.

Prepare an evacuation kit and keep it in your vehicle from May through November.

Make sure that every member of the household knows how to reach each other in case of an evacuation, perhaps by checking in with a friend or relative in another area. Cell phones may not work in a catastrophe.

Schedule an annual review with your insurance agent to determine if your coverage is adequate – not only for property loss but also for total replacement and rebuilding costs.

Document your valuable possessions by taking photographs of them and storing those on the internet cloud or on a disc kept in a safety-deposit box or at a relative's home in another community. Do the same with photocopies of vital documents such as birth certificates, driver's licenses, Social Security cards, credit cards and insurance documents.

Suggested items for evacuation kits

- Prescriptions or special medications
- Change of clothing
- Extra eyeglasses or contact lenses
- Extra set of car keys, credit cards, cash or traveler's checks
- First-aid kit
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Sanitation supplies
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- Food for pets

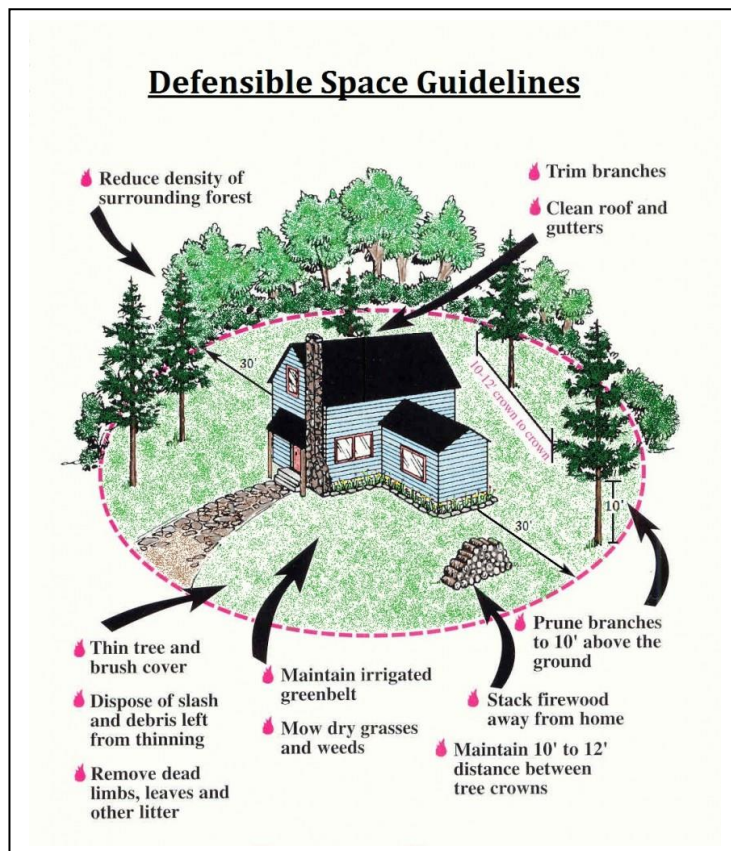
Items to take if time allows

- Easily carried valuables
- Family photos and other irreplaceable items
- Personal computer information on hard drives and disks
- Chargers for cell phones, laptops, etc.

One of the best ways to ensure that your home survives a wildfire is to clear out “defensible space” between your home and the surrounding wooded areas.

Begin with a ring 10 feet around your home that is clear of all flammable vegetation. Use pea gravel, landscaping rock or other fire-resistant materials around the foundation of your home, and maintain green, short grasses further out. Keep this area free of weeds and tall grasses.

Thin or remove trees from 10 to 30 feet away from the home, and thin brush and tall grasses. Ultimately, you will want to break up the continuity from the forests to the home.



Depending on the location of your home, the slope and the nature of the surrounding forests, tree thinning should occur to 100 feet or more – or to the property boundary – in an effort to keep fire from spreading directly to the home. Remove all dead trees, and prune the branches of others to six feet off the ground.

Make sure that your address is clearly visible from the road and that your driveway is adequate for a fire engine.

Finally, it’s a good idea to “harden” your home against flying embers, which can be transported by winds as far as two miles from an active fire.

Cover all vents with fine-mesh steel screens to prevent embers from entering attics and inside walls.

Store firewood at least 30 feet from any

buildings. Keep your yard clear of debris such as pine needles, pine cones, wood slash and shrub trimmings. Consider landscaping with drought-resistant, native plants, which also tend to be fire-resistant.

Each spring, clean your gutters and roof of pine needles and other debris. Look in particular in the “valleys” between the eaves.

If there is a wildfire in the area, store all plastic and wood deck furniture, cushions and other combustible items inside. Do not store combustible materials beneath decks or overhangs at any time. Hook up your garden hose to the spigot and keep it there all summer.

If you have any questions about what you can do to best protect your home, call Lake Dillon Fire at (970) 262-5100 for a courtesy defensible-space review or visit www.ldfr.org for more information.