

TECHNICAL UPDATE

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WILDFIRE MITIGATION

As more people build homes, operate businesses, and vacation in areas where natural vegetation meets human existence, wildfire threats to life and property increase. Wildfire mitigation actions are on-the-ground treatments of properties implemented to reduce the chance of a wildfire causing damage. The [Colorado State Forest Service](#) (CSFS) is the lead state agency for mitigation expertise and develops educational materials and supports programs that help residents and communities take action to reduce their wildfire risk.

SMOKEY THE BEAR

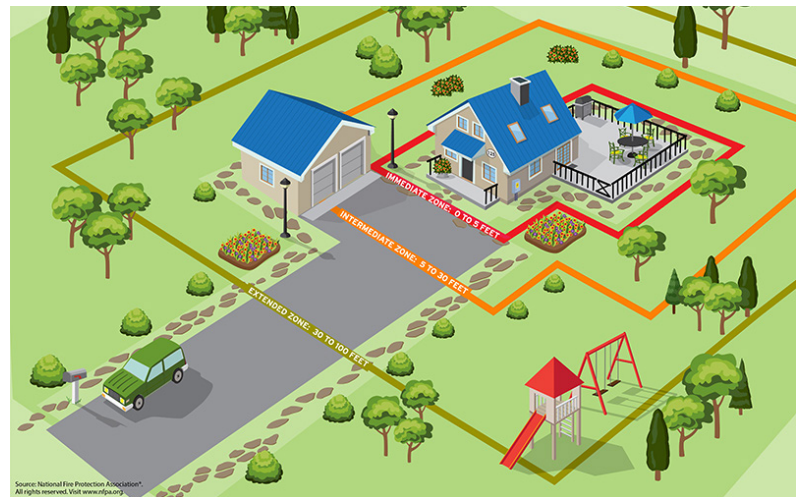
Do you remember the commercials with Smokey the Bear? Created in 1944, the Smokey Bear Wildfire Prevention campaign is the longest-running public service advertising campaign in U.S. history, educating generations about their role in preventing wildfires. Smokey Bear began to attract commercial interest and in 1952 an Act of Congress passed which placed him under the control of the Secretary of Agriculture. The Act provided for the use of collected royalties and fees for continued wildfire prevention education. Though he has already accomplished so much, Smokey's catchphrase "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires," is more important than ever.



CONFRONTING THE WILDFIRE CRISIS

The topic of fire mitigation has risen to one of the top priorities for our national insurance carriers. As we move from one of the wettest years in recent history, we can agree that Colorado has had a slower fire season. Seeing all the new growth and regeneration of even the burn scar areas is impressive. With this growth, we often forget the importance of fire mitigation and preparedness. We know that the beautiful green growth will dry out and can cause an easily ignitable fire. In many instances, our members are the first to help educate their communities about fire safety and the County also takes a lead in firefighting efforts.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released its [Marshall Fire Mitigation Assessment Team \(MAT\) Report](#) in June 2023. The summary is thorough and highlights 54 recommendations to reduce wildfire potential losses. It also has several supportive guides to assist in executing these recommendations. Considered Colorado's most destructive fire, we are reminded by the Marshall Fire that a wildfire is "wild" and can consume buildings, equipment, and neighborhoods as fast as trees. We also have the reality that this is not just a fire for remote areas or in the mountains. Some of the basics of fire preparedness and mitigation for structure protection are consistent throughout various entities: US Fire Administration, the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). The general approach is creating defensible space and solutions for each zone based on distance from the structures (see above).



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

CTSI recommends understanding fuel loads and the types of ember flows to determine mitigation efforts and priorities. This can be accomplished by having a comprehensive Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) conducted for each community and collectively for the County. Entities like the [Ember Alliance](#) can conduct and help build a CWPP. CTSI also has a Loss Control Specialist on staff who is an NFPA Board Certified Fire Protection Specialist to assist, if needed.

MITIGATION MAINTENANCE TIPS

Before a wildfire threatens your area, follow the tips below for in and around your home or office:

- Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks.
- Remove dead vegetation and other items from under your deck or porch, and within 10 feet of the house.
- Screen or box-in areas below patios and decks with wire mesh to prevent debris and combustible materials from accumulating.
- Prune trees so the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- Keep your lawn hydrated and maintained. If it is brown, cut it down to reduce fire intensity.
- Replace or repair roof shingles and tiles that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration.
- Cover exterior attic vents with metal wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from entering the home.