

MITIGATING FOR WILDFIRE

Fire District Boundaries

Did you know that NOT all private lands in Grand County are included within the bounds of a fire district? Though the majority of privately-owned lands are included in a fire district, there are a few subdivisions and homes that are not. In case of a fire emergency, these non-fire district homeowners will likely get a response from a neighboring fire district. **However, those homeowners may be charged a fee for that response.**



If your property is not located within a fire district, you still have a chance to be included in one. You may submit a “Petition for Inclusion” to a neighboring fire district and to ask if they will redraw their boundaries to include your property. Most fire districts will strongly consider these petitions because their ultimate mission is to protect life and property from fire. ***Keep in mind, though, that you will start to get an annual tax bill from the fire district once the inclusion is official.*** Contact info for all Grand Fire Districts is on page 3.

Wildfire and Insurance

Contact your insurance agent today to see what steps you may take to enhance your coverage, reduce your risk, lower your premium, and prevent potential cancellation.

Did you know? Homes in Grand County sometimes face higher insurance premiums (and even cancellation).

It is critical to stress how important the issue of insurance and wildfire mitigation is for homeowners whose properties are affected by the WUI. ***Local fire professionals seek homeowner cooperation and participation in the mitigation process, and insurance companies are demanding it.***

If you are trying to sell a property that has NOT been mitigated, insurance companies may refuse to insure the new buyer’s purchase. Being proactive and spending money up front for mitigation could save you thousands of dollars thereafter.



Defensible Space and the Home Ignition Zone

Each year, wildfires consume hundreds of homes in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) despite firefighters’ best efforts. ***Studies show that as many as 80 percent of homes lost to wildland fires could have been saved if their owners had followed simple fire-safe practices. In addition, wildfire-related deaths often occur because people wait too long to leave their homes.***

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is the area where human-made structures and developments meet and intermingle with undeveloped lands and vegetative fuels. The exact boundaries of the WUI depend on the topography, vegetative fuel types, local weather conditions, and prevailing winds. Nevertheless, if your home is within one mile of a natural area, it is likely within the **Ember Zone** (the zone where wind-driven embers, or firebrands, can threaten your home). You must prepare your home well before a wildland fire occurs. **Ember fires can destroy homes and neighborhoods far from the actual flame front. Firebrands can also cause ignitions well after the fire has passed through a community.**



It is not a question of if, but when, the next major wildland fire will occur. The tips on the following pages are designed to increase awareness and create a safer environment for you, your family, and the responding firefighters.

Grand County Wildfire Council is here to help landowners mitigate for wildfire.
Grand County Wildfire Council
www.bewildfiready.org

JUNK THE JUNIPER BUSHES!



Zone 1 — 1st Priority

0 to 5' out from the structure

GOAL: This zone is designed to prevent flames from coming in direct contact with the structure. Use nonflammable, hard surface materials in this zone, such as rock, gravel, sand, cement, bare earth or stone/concrete pavers.

- **Remove all flammable vegetation**, including shrubs, slash, mulch and other woody debris (including common juniper).
- **Do not store firewood or other combustible materials** inside this zone.
- **Prune tree branches** hanging over the roof and remove all fuels within ten feet of the chimney.
- **Regularly remove all pine needles and other debris** from the roof, deck and gutters.
- **Rake and dispose** of pine needles, dead leaves, mulch and other organic debris within five feet of all decks and structures. Farther than five feet from structures, raking material will not significantly reduce the likelihood of ignition and can negatively affect other trees.
- **Do not use space under decks** for storage.

Zone 2

5 to 30' out from the structure (or to property line)

GOAL: This zone is designed to give an approaching fire less fuel, which will help reduce its intensity as it gets nearer to your home or any structures.

- **Mow grasses** to four inches tall or less.
- **Avoid large accumulations of surface fuels** such as logs, branches, slash and mulch.
- **Remove enough trees** to create at least 10 feet* of space between crowns. Measure from the outermost branch of one tree to the nearest branch on the next tree.
- Small groups of two or three trees may be left in some areas of Zone 2. Spacing of 30 feet* should be maintained between remaining tree groups to ensure fire doesn't jump from one group to another.
- **Remove ladder fuels (lower limbs/tall grasses)** under remaining trees.
- **Prune tree branches** to a height of 6-10 feet from the ground or a third of the total height of the tree, whichever is less.
- **Remove stressed, diseased, dead or dying** trees and shrubs.
- **Get rid of common junipers** because they are highly flammable and tend to hold a layer of flammable material beneath them.
- You can keep isolated shrubs in Zone 2, as long as they are not growing under trees. Keep shrubs at least 10 feet* away from the edge of tree branches.
- **Periodically prune and maintain shrubs** to prevent excessive growth. Remove dead stems annually.
- Spacing between clumps of shrubs should be at least 2 1/2 times* their mature height. Each clump should have a diameter no more than twice the mature height of the vegetation. Example: For shrubs that grow 6 feet tall, space clumps 15 feet apart or more (measured from the edge of the crowns of vegetation clumps). Each clump of these shrubs should not exceed 12 feet in diameter.

* Horizontal spacing recommendations are minimums and can be increased to reduce potential fire behavior, particularly on slopes. Consult a forestry, fire or natural resource professional for guidance with spacing on slopes.

Zone 3

30-100' out from the structure (or to property line)

GOAL: This zone focuses on mitigation that keeps fire on the ground (which is easier to fight), but it's also a space to make choices that can improve forest health. Healthy forests include trees of multiple ages, sizes and species, where adequate growing room is maintained over time.

If the distance of 100 feet to the edge of Zone 3 stretches beyond your property lines, it's encouraged to work with adjoining property owners to complete an appropriate defensible space. If your house is on a steep slope or has certain topographic considerations, this zone may be larger.

- Mowing grasses is not necessary in Zone 3.
- **Watch for hazards associated with ladder fuels.** The chance of a surface fire climbing into the trees is reduced in a forest where surface fuels are widely separated and low tree branches are removed.
- **Tree crown spacing of 6-10 feet** is suggested. Consider creating openings or meadows between small clumps of trees so fire must transition to the ground to keep moving.
- Any approved method of **slash treatment** is acceptable in this zone, including removal, piling and burning, lop and scatter, or mulching. Lop-and-scatter or mulching treatments should be minimized in favor of treatments that reduce the amount of woody material in the zone. The farther this material is from the home, the better.

Firewise Landscaping Tips:

www.middleparkcd.com/forestry-resources/

Make Home Ignition Zone Maintenance a Priority

HOME IGNITION ZONE CHECKLIST PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR WILDFIRE WITH THESE STEPS

TOP PRIORITIES

- CLEAR** roof, deck and gutters of pine needles and other debris.*
- MOW** grass and weeds to a height of 4 inches or less.*
- RAKE AND REMOVE** all pine needles and other flammable debris from 5 feet around the foundation of your home and deck.*
- TREAT** or mow shrubs that re-sprout aggressively (such as Gambel oak) every 3-5 years or more depending on growth rates.
- REMOVE** branches that hang over the roof and chimney.
- DISPOSE** of slash from thinning trees and shrubs by chipping, hauling to a disposal site or piling in open areas for burning later. *Any accumulation of slash that's chipped or otherwise should be 30 feet or more from the home.**
- AVOID** creating continuous areas of wood chips on the ground when chipping logs and/or slash. Break up the layer of wood chips by adding nonflammable material, or allow for wide gaps of at least 3 feet between chip accumulations.

* Address as needed, more than once a year.

FIREWOOD

- Keep firewood stacked uphill from (or at the same elevation as) any structures, and keep the woodpile at least 30 feet away from the home.
- Do not stack firewood between remaining trees, underneath the deck or on the deck.
- Remove flammable vegetation within 10 feet of woodpiles.

PROPANE TANKS

- Keep aboveground tanks at least 30 feet from the home, preferably on the same elevation as the house.
- Remove flammable vegetation within 10 feet of all propane tanks and gas meters.

DRIVEWAYS

- Maintain at least 10 feet between tree crowns, thinning them a minimum of 30 feet back from each side of the driveway from the house to the main access road.
- Remove ladder fuels beneath trees after thinning.
- Remove any shrubs that are within 10 feet of the outer edge of tree crowns.
- Space shrubs apart at least 2 ½ times their mature height, as measured from the edge of the shrubs.
- Post signs at the end of the driveway with your house number that are noncombustible, reflective and easily visible to emergency responders.
- Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road to a minimum of 14 feet to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

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SOLUTIONS FOR MANAGING SLASH

Grand County Wildfire Council has free Chipping Days each summer. Check out <https://bewildfireready.org/community-chipping-days/>

1 Spread slash and wood chips over a large area to avoid heavy accumulations and large piles. Being close to the ground will help speed decomposition.

2 Burn slash piles, but before doing so, always contact your county sheriff's office or local fire department for current information or possible restrictions.

3 Lop and scatter slash by cutting it into small pieces (less than 24 inches long) and spreading it over a wide area, to a depth not exceeding 18 inches. Don't scatter material over 4 inches in diameter.

WINDOWS

- Install metal screens
- Use multiple panes windows with one pane being tempered
- Limit the size and number of windows in your home that face large areas of vegetation

VENTS

- Metal mesh screens that are 1/8-inch or less is recommended to prevent ember entry and ignition from the inside out

EXTERIOR WALLS

- Fiber cement board, brick, stucco or other fire resistant materials are recommended

DECKS/FENCES

- Use noncombustible fencing and decking materials if possible
- Remove all combustible materials from underneath the deck

ROOF & ROOF EXTENSION

- Avoid wood and shake-shingle roofs
- Use "Class A" roofing materials: metal sheets, concrete or shingles made from asphalt, tile, clay, stone or metal
- Keep the roof and gutters clear of flammable debris.
- Roof eaves are particularly prone to ignition, so [minimize overhang and build soffits with fire-resistant materials.](#)

GARAGE

- Install weather stripping around & under vehicle access doors
- If the garage is attached to the home, install a solid door with self-closing hinges between living areas and garage.
- Do not store combustibles or flammable liquids near combustion equipment (e.g. a hot water heater)

CHIMNEY

- Cover chimney and stovepipe outlets with a noncombustible screen of 1/4-inch wire mesh to reduce size/energy of embers leaving the chimney.

[Wildfire Home Assessment Checklist](#)
bewildfireready.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/wildfire-checklist_IBHS.pdf

[FEMA Fire Resistant Construction Materials](#)
emilms.fema.gov/IS320/WM0103020text.htm

[FEMA Home Builders Guide to Construction—Wildfires](#)
https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fema_p_737_0.pdf

[Hardening Your Home Checklists & Assessments](#)
www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/hardening-your-home/