

DURING & AFTER THE FIRE

Initial Actions

For a map and info on current wildfires, visit inciweb.nwcg.gov/

For a map and info on smoke and air quality, visit fire.airnow.gov/

After the initial pre-evacuation or evacuation of your property, your endorphins will be running on high and you may be in some state of shock, panic, confusion, and distress. Consequently, you may not think of all the things you should do after the fire.

- Call, text, or use social media to let friends and family know you are okay.
- Check the jurisdiction's website and social media accounts to determine if they have set up an Evacuation Center or Disaster Assistance Center (DAC). If you were evacuated, it may be imperative that you check in with the Evac Center to let them know you have evacuated and how you can be reached. They may also have resources on shelters.

[MAP - Grand County Evacuation Zones](#)

Grand County Emergency: www.gcemergency.com/

- Sign up for **CodeRED Notifications** if you have not already done so. **Grand County:** www.gcemergency.com
- Limit wildfire smoke exposure and keep an eye out for air quality advisories.
- Pay attention to any community meetings that may be held.
- **DO NOT GO AROUND, MOVE, OR OTHERWISE BYPASS BARRICADES AND CLOSURES. They are there for your safety.**

Next Steps

- **Contact your insurance agent and mortgage company** to let them know what happened, where you are, and how you can be reached.
- **Keep ALL receipts.** Out-of-pocket expenses during a mandatory evacuation are reimbursable under most standard homeowner policies.
- **Prepare a detailed inventory** of everything in your house so that you can verify upon reentry whether it was damaged or not. Make two copies; one for yourself and one for the insurance adjuster. Your list should be as complete as possible, including a description of the items, dates of purchase or approximate age, cost at time of purchase and estimated replacement cost.
- **Determine what important documents were lost** and begin replacing them (passport, ID, credit cards, birth certificate, will and living will, the itinerary and plane tickets for your next vacation).

Insight from a Wildfire Survivor

Shelly Olson is a wildfire survivor and first responder whose home was lost in the East Troublesome Fire of 2020.

It is unbelievably devastating to find out that your home was damaged or destroyed by wildfire. You may have difficulty making decisions and feel as if your head is in a fog. You may experience post traumatic stress symptoms such as agitation, irritability, depression, anxiety, fear, hypervigilance, insomnia, nightmares, or flashbacks. If this happens to you, you are not alone. Please reach out and ask for help in facing and processing your trauma.

When your family, friends, community, and even strangers offer to help you—accept the help, however large or small. You may think you don't need it, but you do and you will. It helps you and it makes the giver feel useful in a seemingly hopeless situation. Accept graciously and pay it forward if you can.

*"If you're going through hell, keep going."
— Winston Churchill*

Returning Home

- **Do not return to your home until it is declared safe** by local authorities. Injury is very common after a disaster when returning home because of debris, sharp objects, and unstable structures. Protect yourself by wearing eye protection, a mask, sturdy boots, long sleeves, long pants and gloves when returning home and cleaning up.
- **Heed warnings from officials** about boil water orders, food safety, debris and hazardous material disposal, health concerns (mental health, tetanus shots, wound care, and respiratory issues).
- **Inspect electrical, heating, septic, and water systems for damage BEFORE first use.**
- **Make whatever temporary repairs you can.** Cover broken windows, damaged roofs and walls to prevent further destruction. Save receipts for supplies and materials you purchase.
- **Take photos of all damaged areas and items.**

Post-Fire Recovery Resources

After the East Troublesome Fire devastated over 193,000 acres of land in Grand County in October 2020, the Middle Park Conservation District developed a webpage full of Post-Fire Recovery resources and websites. Check it out at: middleparkcd.com/east-troublesome-fire/

Post-Fire Threats: Flood & Mud



Debris flows (commonly called mud slides, mud flows or debris avalanches) are shallow landslides that travel rapidly downslope as muddy slurries after being saturated with water. The flowing mud carries rocks, trees, and other debris as it pours down the slopes.

Sudden debris flows gushing down rain-sodden slopes and gullies are widely recognized as a hazard to human life and property. Most debris flows are localized in small gullies, threatening only those buildings in their direct path. **Bare slopes left denuded by wildfires are especially susceptible to more catastrophic debris flows during and immediately after rainstorms.**

Mudslides and debris flows can also be exacerbated by the fact that high intensity fires burn with such heat that the organic matter in the soil sometimes melts and forms a waxy coating on the soil that prevents infiltration of rain water. This now “hydrophobic” soil has a reduced capacity to absorb and retain moisture. **Debris flows often occur**

WITHOUT WARNING in areas where they have never been seen before.

Anyone living downslope of a burned area should be aware of this potential hazard. Following a fire and for at least 5-10 years thereafter, burned areas are far more susceptible to debris flows.

Known to start on slopes as low as 15 degrees, more dangerous and faster moving debris flows are increasingly likely to develop the steeper the slopes. **About two-thirds of all debris flows start in hollows or troughs at the heads of small drainages.**

Commonly, a debris flow will coalesce on a hillside and flow quickly downslope, inundating everything in its path. Topography controls a debris flow path just like moving water, so **flows generally follow stream courses and spread out onto flatter depositional areas like alluvial fans where streams exit steep areas.**

If you live in a mudslide prone area, the two most important actions taken on rainy nights are:

- 1) Heed flood warnings.
- 2) Do NOT sleep in lower-floor bedrooms on the sides of houses that face steep slopes or drainages.

Other Important Actions

- Check out Grand County's [FLOOD READY](#) guide
- Check out Colorado's [Flood Threat Bulletin](#) (updated daily)
- Sign up for **CodeRED Emergency Alerts**
- Read the Red Cross Info on Preparing for Landslides: [redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/landslide.html](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/landslide.html)
- Consider getting [Flood Insurance](#) if your house is threatened.

Tips and Clues That May Save Your Life

 Before and during rains, watch for cracks in snow, ice, soil, or rock; bulges at the base of slopes; the appearance of holes or bare spots on hillsides; tilting trees; or the increased muddiness of streams. Any sudden increase in runoff or debris should be cause for concern.

 Listen for unusual rumbling sounds or noises that may indicate shifting soil, rock or breaking vegetation or structures.

 Remain informed as to local rainfall levels during intense rainstorms. Check frequently for early flood warnings.

 Debris flows can be triggered when rainfall exceeds ¼-inch per hour, especially when soil may be water-logged.

 It takes time for bare slopes to recover from a wildfire. In the meantime, be prepared for rapid evacuation should it become necessary.

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Prepare Now: There are many ways to take action and prepare before a disaster occurs: creating a plan, putting together an emergency kit, and getting your home ready.



Know how you will be warned



Prepare an emergency kit



Make a plan, know evacuation routes



Leave before flooding starts



Protect your property

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Survive During: Take an active role in your safety by knowing key protective actions and what to avoid.



Disconnect electricity and gas



Don't walk or drive in flood water



Get to higher ground or the roof



Follow evacuation orders



Lead livestock to a safer location

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BEFORE & DURING THE FIRE (READY, SET, GO)

Ranchers & Livestock Owners

Livestock operations are at high risk from wildfires because of their more remote locations and the generally lighter fuels (vegetation) on grazing land that can carry an advancing wildfire very quickly. It is often impossible for many ranchers to evacuate their livestock due to the number of animals they have or their location on the property. Because of these things, ***ranchers must work diligently to prepare their property and make evacuation and contingency plans for both people and livestock.***



In the case of livestock operations, it is often not feasible to evacuate large numbers of livestock. As a result, operators should consider establishing relatively safe havens for their animals. One way this can be accomplished is through rotational grazing. Intensive-managed grazing near ranch houses, barns or equipment areas can provide defensible space for those assets and create an area where livestock can be held away from the main body of the fire.

Remaining vegetation in well-grazed areas will not usually carry a fire and spot fires can be easily controlled. ***By using grazed pastures as defensible space during high fire season, livestock operators can then open gates should a fire occur to allow livestock to transition from pastures where they are feeding to the grazed area where they can be better protected.***

Prepare in Advance

- Know the fire history and typical fire behavior for the area.** Concentrate preparations on areas of the ranch where a fire is most-likely to approach.
- Establish and maintain firebreaks** around pastures.
- Create defensible space** around all structures, including barns and hay sheds.
- Reinforce fences** with metal posts, if necessary.
- Create a safe zone clear of all vegetation for ranch equipment.
- Clear vegetation** around fuel tanks.
- Create a Livestock Evacuation Plan**
- Ensure proper branding** and registration of livestock.
- Establish a contingency plan for feeding livestock** if grazing land is destroyed by fire.
- Have spare gate keys, combinations and property maps** available for firefighters, or leave gates unlocked.
- Clearly mark water tanks, ponds and other water supplies** available for fire department use.
- Reinforce bridges** to make them capable of supporting the weight of a fire engine or bulldozer and clearly mark weight limits or unsafe bridges. Mark alternate paths around the bridges if they are incapable of supporting heavy equipment.



*MOVING FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION
MESSAGING TO MITIGATION,
AND WORDS TO WORK*

Photo quote by Pam Leschak, USFS (retired)

What to do when wildfire is approaching

- Open and/or unlock gates so livestock can escape flames and firefighters have easier access.** If time allows, relocate livestock to ranch areas with lighter fuels or with well-maintained firebreaks or other defensive measures.
- Hook up and load stock trailer** to evacuate particularly valuable animals (saddle horses, breeding stock, etc.) when necessary.
- Move equipment** into a safe, non-vegetated area.
- Close all doors and windows** and turn ON lights in barns and other structures.
- Shut off propane tanks.**
- Ensure all water source connections/locations** are identified and operational.
- Evacuate** family members, pets, valuables and other personal possessions to a safe area as soon as possible.
- Monitor property** for small fires started by embers.
- Monitor manure piles and hay storage.**
- Leave if the fire threatens your own life and safety.**

