



# Branching Out

## A Forest Stewardship e-newsletter

Fall 2006

Brought to you by:



## Welcome

Fire Ready provides wildfire protection and forestry services. Our mission is connecting property owners and communities to their landscapes through services that enhance their forest's aesthetics, health and safety.

We would like to say THANK YOU to all of our customers, and our many valuable contacts in the industry. We could not be where we are today without your loyalty, your expertise and your business.

For more information on these, and other topics, please visit our website at [www.fireready.com](http://www.fireready.com)

## Fire Risk Doesn't Fall In Autumn

*Getting Work Done Before the Snow Flies*

Fall is an excellent time to get around to those fire mitigation-related projects around your home. The days are cooler, the trees are not yet dormant, bug activity is slowing and the weather is great!

Fall brings its own fire hazards. At higher elevations, mountain grasses have begun to dry out, creating fuel for wildfires. With autumn's frequent winds, small fires can be quickly fanned into catastrophic events. Doing thinning and clearing work during the fall also reduces the possibility of attracting beetles to certain species of stressed or cut trees, because by then these unwanted bugs are no longer flying.

Take advantage of the great fall weather check these safety tips around your home:

- As always, keep dry grasses and weeds mowed and well watered.
- Remove vegetation that can move a fire from the ground to treetops (ladder fuels).
- Dispose of dead material, limbs, and branches by chipping or hauling.
- Clean roof and gutters of pine needles and leaves.
- Clean your chimney; check spark-arrester screens and fire extinguishers.
- Remove any branches overhanging roofs and chimneys.
- Firewood is stacked uphill or away from the house.
- The clearance of trees and branches is wide enough for emergency vehicle access.
- Consider expanding your defensible space into the secondary and tertiary zones.
- Review your emergency/evacuation kit – include non-perishable food, potable water, flashlight and batteries.

## Building A Plan

*Community Wildfire Protection Plans*

Now is the time to begin preparing a community fire plan if your neighborhood does not already have one, so your community will be "fire ready" next year. Your local Fire Ready office can help you determine if you qualify for fire mitigation cost share funds through your local fire department or the state forest district.

Even if funds have been spent for this year, fall is the time when many departments and districts are planning and seeking funds for next year. Community interest will be appreciated, and being proactive may benefit you in the long run.

Find out if your county or city has developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. There are many resources available to help subdivisions develop plans. Find out if your community has an active Fire Council, and get involved.



## Planning To Build?

### *Think Ahead to Wildfire Hazards*

One of the best ways to reduce a structure's risk from wildfire, if you have this luxury, is through site selection and planning. If you're planning to build, keep in mind the following tips:

- Prior to building or planning, consult with the local planning and zoning department or building commission. There may be restrictions on the types of materials or a wildland-urban interface code to follow.
- Invite a professional to evaluate potential building locations for wildfire safety. Your local Fire Ready office will be glad to help.
- If suitable building locations are limited, you may need to focus more attention on creating defensible space. In new construction, it is usually less expensive to create defensible space after the driveway access has been constructed, but before the home has been built.

There are two overall solutions in reducing wildfire risk for structures:

- 1) build more fire-resistant structures with regards to building site location and construction materials, and
- 2) reduce hazardous fuel build-up by creating defensible space.

Choose a building site with respect to wildfire hazards – build in flat areas set back from steep slopes. Consider level terrain versus hillsides, canyons, or ridges. Avoid building in gullies which can act like chimneys, increasing fire behavior and intensity. Fires on slopes burn hotter and move faster.

Sometimes, the suitable building locations are limited, in which case, more attention can be directed towards non-combustible construction materials and creating a defensible space.

Defensible space is as important to your home as a solid foundation. In new construction, it is usually less expensive to create defensible space after the driveway access has been constructed, but before the home has been built.

Properly identify your home. This is important for a wildfire event, as well as any other emergency situation. Street names and addresses should be well marked and visible from all directions of travel for at least 150 feet. Signs should be made of fire-resistant materials.

Narrow roads, dead-end streets, steep driveways, and weak bridges can delay firefighters, or prevent their arrival at all. Access routes can also work as fire breaks. Subdivisions can cooperatively reduce wildfire risk by “brushing” access roads. Consider incorporating a circular drive with a large enough turning radius to accommodate fire trucks and other emergency vehicles.

### *Use Fire-Resistant Construction Materials*

- Consider a simple design that have less exterior surface. Complex structures have increased surface area, and create heat traps in areas such as parapet walls, solar collectors, roofs intersecting walls, roof valleys, and decks. Strategically locate these building forms to reduce wildfire risk.
- Metal roofing is non-combustible, durable, and lightweight. Avoid flat roofs where leaves, needles, and other flammable debris will accumulate. Keep the gutters clear. Wood shakes and shingles are almost like kindling.
- Windows usually fail from radiant heat before a building ignites, providing a direct path for the fire to reach the building interior. Consider installing fire-resistant shutters. Minimize the size and number of windows on the side of the house most exposed to a potential wildfire.
- Conventional wood decks often ignite before the fire gets to the home. Isolate the deck from the down slope. Heavy timber is less combustible than thin decking. Metal railings will not burn. A deck that is fully enclosed on the bottom eliminates the heat trap.



### *Water Source*

Defensible space and an available water source for use by firefighters are key to wildfire survival. Consider developing an emergency water source, with a self-generated pump.

### *Barrier Products*

A variety of barrier products are available to homeowners – such as fire-resistant paint, gels, and home fire-retardant systems. Consider having barrier products on hand. When used in conjunction with mitigation efforts, barrier products can increase the likelihood of home wildfire survival.

## **The Value of Trees**

*“I never before knew the full value of trees. Under them I breakfast, dine, write, read and receive my company.”*  
– Thomas Jefferson

Having trees around your home can increase its value, provide privacy screening and filter out unwanted noise. Trees produce oxygen, and remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the air—slowing global warming. They provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, and it has been shown that trees can reduce human stress.

For many of us, living in a forested area is a dream come true. That privilege carries with it a responsibility to be good forest stewards. That means doing everything we can to ensure that our forest is healthy. Our forests no longer experience natural fire cycles that clear out underbrush, and dead or bug-infested trees. As a result, forests become dense and overcrowded, a condition that can cause entire areas to be unhealthy, and prone to drought and bug infestations. These conditions are not natural, and they increase the risk from wildfire to our forests and our homes.

The good news is that there is much we can do. Forest thinning, spraying for beetles and other insects, and clearing brush can increase your forest's health, and decrease your risk from wildfire. Finally, creating defensible space improves your home's chances of survival if a wildfire event does occur.

For more information on taking care of your trees, contact the Neighborhood Tree Program of your city or county.

## **Branching Out**

*A Quarterly Forest Stewardship e-newsletter*

Fire Ready is electronically offering this e-newsletter four times a year, as a complimentary way to provide forest stewardship information to our valuable clients and contacts. To subscribe, please send an email to [info@fireready.com](mailto:info@fireready.com). To unsubscribe, please send an email with “unsubscribe” in the subject line to [info@fireready.com](mailto:info@fireready.com).

## **For more information, contact:**

Fire Ready: [www.fireready.com](http://www.fireready.com)

Firewise: [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

Colorado State Forest Service: <http://csfs.colostate.edu/>

Your local fire department

Your local Fire Council