

# NEWS RELEASE

## For Immediate Release

June 20, 2007

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## **Create Defensible Space to Help Protect Lives, Homes and Communities from Wildfires**

*WESTERN COLORADO* — It only takes a few days without precipitation to turn lush green landscape into tinder-dry fuels that wreak havoc with firefighters trying to defend homes and communities from the wrath of wildfires. That's why it's important to create defensible space in areas that are at high risk from wildfires. A defensible space slows the rate and intensity of an advancing wildfire, creates an area where fire suppression operations can occur and helps protect forests from structure fires.

Some areas of Colorado received normal or above normal moisture this winter and spring, but most other areas are dry and ready to burn, so it's imperative that homeowners living in Colorado's wildland-urban interface take steps now to create a defensible space around their homes. Defensible space around homes and other structures helps protect lives, property, communities and natural resources from the potentially devastating effects of large wildfires.

The Colorado State Forest Service developed the following defensible space guidelines to help landowners protect their property from wildfires:

- For homes and other structures located on flat ground, create a defensible space that extends a minimum of 75 feet around the home; extend the distance to a minimum of 100 feet for structures located on slopes.
- Thin continuous tree and brush cover around all structures. Remove all flammable vegetation around the initial 15 feet of a structure.
- Beyond the initial 15 feet, thin trees so that there is 10-12 feet of space between the crowns. Occasionally, clumps of 2-3 trees are acceptable if additional space surrounds them.
- Mow grass and weeds located within 30 feet of structures to a height of 6 inches or less.
- Prune tree branches to a height of 10 feet above the ground if the trees are within the designated defensible space.
- Chip, haul away or carefully burn piles of debris left over from thinning. Check with your local fire department for burning restrictions before burning any debris.
- Remove shrubs, small trees and any other "ladder" fuels from under large trees. If these fuels are not removed, they can carry a ground fire into the tree crowns and promote the rapid spread of a wildfire.
- Trim all tree branches that extend over roof eaves.
- Remove branches that are within 15 feet of chimneys.
- Monitor the defensible space and remove debris, shrubs and other vegetation that may accumulate after the initial treatment.

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- Clean pine needles, leaves and other debris from roofs and gutters to eliminate an ignition source for embers or firebrands, especially during hot, dry weather.
- Stack firewood and wood piles at least 30 feet from any structure. Clear flammable vegetation within 10 feet of wood piles.
- Place propane tanks and fuel storage containers at least 30 feet from structures and clear flammable vegetation from within 10 feet of all fuel tanks.

By following these guidelines, landowners not only have a better chance of protecting their own property in the event of a wildfire, they may also help protect the surrounding forests and communities that attracted them to the area.

For more information about how to create defensible space, visit <http://csfs.colostate.edu/library/pdfs/RUFireWise/wholenotebook.pdf>, [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) or your local fire department.

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN WILDLAND FIRE INFORMATION:  
WORKING SIDE-BY-SIDE FROM THE GREAT PLAINS TO THE GREAT DIVIDE TO  
PREVENT WILDLAND FIRES AND PROMOTE FOREST AND WATERSHED HEALTH.