

# GRASSFIRE MITIGATION



**Grassfire Mitigation** includes vegetation management, property management and prevention. The Colorado Springs Fire Department recommends creating at least **10** feet of separation immediately around the home as well as mowing grasses and weeds to a height of no more than 4 inches at least **30** feet from any structure, but not to extend beyond the property line. You can manage the vegetation beyond 30 feet as long as you do not encroach on your neighbor. Remember, you can't treat what you don't own!

## Grass Fire Behavior Characteristics

- Grassfires move fast; they are usually a wind driven event. Can you run 20 mph?
- General rule : flame lengths can range anywhere between 1 1/2—3 times the height of the vegetation.
- Remember, green grass can burn; they can dry out in no time.
- Injuries and fatalities have occurred in fine, flashy fuels.

## Grassfire Statistics

- 37% of all wildland fires in the U.S. are grassfires
- Leading causes are
  - Intentional starts
  - Hot embers or ashes
  - Debris burning
  - High winds (down power lines)
  - Smoking
- Lightning accounts for only 4% of grassfire ignitions

## Grassfire Mitigation Guidelines

### Improve your Home's Survivability in the Event of a Grassfire

- Mow grasses and weeds to a height of no more than 4" , especially once they have cured out.
- Mow clearance a minimum of 30 feet around any structure; house, outbuilding , barn or garage
- Keep landscaping well irrigated.
- If your property is greater than 2 acres, mow a 10 foot swath around the boundary of your property.
- Do not use the area on or under decks for storage.
- Store firewood at least 15' away from the house and decks.
- Use rock mulch and stone paths as landscaping design to break up fuels around the house.
- Items stored outside should be more than 15' away from any structure.



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**Colorado Springs Fire Department encourages homeowners to reduce wildfire risk on their own property. The time to act is *BEFORE* a wildfire occurs!**

## **Precautions to prevent grassfire ignition**

- Open burning is restricted in Colorado Springs. Know what you can and can't do—contact the Fire Marshal's office for restrictions and burn bans at 385-7342.
- Know the fire danger adjective posted daily on the fire department webpage @ [www.springsgov.com](http://www.springsgov.com).
- Do not drive off-road or park in tall, dry grass. Your car's exhaust system can start a fire.
- Use your ashtray; do not throw cigarette butts out of your car.
- When barbecuing, dispose of coals properly.
- With any recreational or cooking fire, keep 2 forms of extinguishment within 10 feet and always have an adult present. (Examples include pail of water, charged garden hose, extinguisher, shovel, etc.)
- Never leave any open flame or heat source unattended.
- Monitor the wind speed; recommend no open flame with winds above 10 miles per hour.
- Debris burning (i.e. leaves, piles, slash) is NOT allowed in Colorado Springs.

## **Hiring A Contractor To Mitigate Your Property**

### **Before Hiring a Contractor**

- Schedule a free, on-site consultation from the Wildfire Mitigation office by calling (719) 385-7342.
- Become knowledgeable about wildfire mitigation. Free homeowner packets are available from the Wildfire Mitigation office, 375 Printers Parkway.
- Visit the Wildfire Mitigation Demonstration sites around town. Call (719) 385-7342 for locations.
- Request references from friends and neighbors.
- Do your research and shop around; get estimates and referrals before hiring.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**What can I do to maintain the vegetation around my home? Do I need approval to remove vegetation?**

- Normal maintenance and treatment of a yard's landscape can be done without any city approvals. Vegetation within 10' of the home may be removed without city review if necessary to comply with wildfire risk management. Thinning and removal of dead and diseased trees, brush and limbs do not require prior approval.

**When should I mow the grass and weeds?**

- Even green grass / weeds can burn so we recommend mowing them to a height of 4 inches or less. It is even more critical that you keep them mowed later in summer when the grasses and weeds are cured out.