

Bent Tree Fire Mitigation

As several huge fires taught us, wildfire is a come-as-you-are disaster. Mitigation both reduces your risk and enables firefighters to do their jobs. So, how to protect your home and Bent Tree?

As responsible neighbors, it's crucial that we come together and take proactive steps to safeguard our part of Black Forest. The eastern half burned not that long ago and our side is obviously at the same risk. By mitigating our properties against wildfire, we can significantly reduce the threat and potential devastation caused by these way-too-common natural disasters.

It really matters. If nothing else, our firefighters won't try to save properties that aren't mitigated simply because they can't. If we don't do our part, nothing they can do will make a difference. And they'd be at extreme risk if they tried.

How You Can Help:

1. **Create Defensible Space:** Clear away flammable debris, vegetation, and dead plants out to a minimum of 30 feet around your home. This creates a buffer zone that helps slow or stop the spread of wildfires. Contact Ed at FireMitigation@BTPOA.net if you want an inspection to show you what needs to be done.
2. **Maintain Your Property:** Regularly trim trees, remove dead branches, and clean gutters to reduce the accumulation of dry, combustible material. Block embers from getting into your attic. A bit of metal screen in the vents is all it takes.
3. **Fire-resistant Landscaping:** Choose fire-resistant plants, create rock gardens, and use non-combustible mulch or gravel to reduce the risk of fire ignition. That zone right against your home is critical.
4. **Establish an Emergency Plan:** I'll post some tips here but you need to care for your family first. Put all your important materials (documents, memory sticks with photos, etc., perhaps small heirlooms) in a fire-resistant storage box. Create a pre-evacuation checklist from the links below. Then, if the worst happens, it's just a matter of throwing all of that in a car and leaving. You really, really don't want to start thinking about it when you can smell smoke.

Wildfire doesn't care about lines on a map, of course, so what your neighbors do affects you just as what you do helps protect them. Along that line, Ed is working with the fire fighters and El Paso County to organize a huge slash chipping day on July 8th. It will concentrate on our borders along Higby, Roller Coaster and CO-105 because those roads can't serve as fire breaks with the overgrowth you see every day as you drive

those roads. Fire fighters can't stop wildfire from burning into Bent Tree until we create defensible space along those roads.

Getting that done will require lots of volunteers in the weeks before that Saturday plus some on the chipping day itself. Please email Ed at FireMitigation@BTPOA.net with your questions and to volunteer. We really need you (and your kids)! This is also a great community service opportunity.

Resources:

Write to Ed at FireMitigation@BTPOA.net if you'd like your property inspected for mitigation needs.

El Paso County has an automated emergency notification system. Sign up so that you get such notices: <https://elpasoteller911.org/246/Peak-Alerts>

NextDoor.com has a Bent Tree neighborhood where we're discussing wildfire and mitigation. It allows two-way conversations, unlike web pages like this. Join if you haven't and go take a look if you haven't visited in a while. To join, ask one of your neighbors who's on NextDoor to invite you. Write to Ed if that doesn't work and he'll invite you. FireMitigation@BTPOA.net

Links:

If you have no idea where to start on mitigation, start here:
<https://csfs.colostate.edu/live-wildfire-ready/>

This is your go-to place for all things mitigation. Spend some time learning here:
<https://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/>

This one addresses property insurance, which is a real problem given recent building costs and property valuation increases:
<https://dre.colorado.gov/division-notifications/colorado-wildfires-protecting-your-home>

Look here for questions about our local fire fighters, burning rules, etc.:
<https://www.monumentfire.org/>

This site allows you to see the current wildfire risk assessment around Colorado:
<https://co-pub.coloradoforestatlas.org/>

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Finally, if you still need motivation, take a look at recent Colorado experiences:

You certainly remember the Marshall Fire up north early last year. Those residents didn't think they were at risk and so grew trees right up to their homes, didn't prepare their homes against blown embers, didn't have evacuation plans, etc. Here's their before and after:



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Here's another bit of motivation for you:

Voice of the Consumer: Time to focus on wildfire preparedness.

- Katie Pelton
- Gazette: May 7, 2023



A firefighter working with the Bureau of Land Management sprays a tree with water during a prescribed burn in the Deer Haven area northwest of Cañon City on Wednesday, Nov. 2, 2022. The burn covered approximately 69 out of 177 acres that the agency plans to burn in the area. According to BLM Rocky Mountain District Fire Management Officer John Markalunas, federal, state and local agencies are working together to try to perform more prescribed burns in effort of helping mitigate wildfires in Colorado. (The Gazette, Parker Seibold)

May is National Wildfire Preparedness Month. We are talking with the Red Cross about how you can get involved and what steps you should take now. We know all too well how devastating wildfires can be in our community.

"It's a wonderful time to make people aware of what's happening right now," said Phil Martinez, Red Cross executive director for southeast Colorado. "Wildfires, we're talking

about some of the areas around Colorado, it's a big disaster here, and just to really be prepared for that.

"There are three ways that you can actually be prepared. Volunteer with us, come out and help during a wildfire where we can certainly provide you some shelter. For those folks that are affected, we can also provide you a comfort kit. We can get you a caseworker.

"Anybody that's ever going through a disaster can certainly get help through the Red Cross."

The first thing we should all do is make an evacuation plan, in case of a disaster. "It is so important. You want to make sure that you sit down with the family and you have a discussion," said Martinez. "What you want to do is really have an evacuation plan. That's first and foremost. No. 1, figure out where you're going to go."

"In the event that it is horrific that you have to depart separately — whether it's a home fire or a disaster — you certainly have to have a plan of where you're going to meet. So, you want to sit down with the family, have an evacuation plan and make sure you're ready to go," Martinez added. "Have a bag ready to go immediately. We suggest all your medications, look at your pets and animals, make sure you have what you need there, phone chargers, all those things that are relevant so you can make sure and have that ready to go."

Here's a list of items that you can include in your survival kit: water, food, flashlight, radio, first-aid kit, medications, copies of personal documents, cellphone charger, emergency contact information and more.

Last year, more than 120 Red Cross volunteers responded to wildfires across Colorado and Wyoming. They are always in need of more volunteers. You can find out more information at [RedCross.org](https://www.redcross.org).