

Wildfire in Colorado...where do you get your information?

A mixture of large and small wildfires occurred across Colorado in 2019. These fires were due to a mixture of dry conditions, combined with gusty, warm winds and, sometimes, careless fire prevention efforts. There were instances when residents had to be evacuated as a large wildfire moved toward larger communities. Would you know what to do to protect yourself and your loved ones in this situation? In addition, if you live in an area that is susceptible to wildfires, how can you prepare yourself and your home?

To assist in your preparation for fire, the National Weather Service provides a variety of fire weather forecast products. At least twice a day in Colorado, fire weather planning forecasts are made from each National Weather Service forecast office serving the state. A Fire Weather Watch may be issued, if in the next 12 to 48 hours, the forecast includes gusty winds of 25 mph or greater, relative humidity of less than 15 percent for at least three hours, dry lightning, or a combination of weather and fuel conditions that may make large wildfires possible. A Red Flag Warning will be issued if these same critical fire conditions are forecast within the next 24 hours.

Both Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings are issued in coordination with land management agencies. The fire weather spot program supports land management agencies for both prescribed burns and for wildfires. A fire weather spot forecast is a detailed forecast for a prescribed burn or an individual wildfire. For national type 2 or type 1 fires the National Weather Service will send an IMET (incident meteorologist) to a fire team to provide on-site weather support and detailed fire forecasts.

If you live in the wildland-urban interface there are a number of actions you can take to reduce your personal fire threat, including reducing vegetation near your home and putting a fire resistant roof on your home.

More information is available from your National Weather Service at:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/fire>

or from your Department of Homeland Security at:

<http://www.ready.gov/wildfires>.

When a wildfire occurs, there will likely be years of increased flood threat on the burn scar. A healthy forest can handle an inch to inch and a half of rain with no flood risk. Once the litter and vegetation is removed by wildfire, as little as a half inch of rain in a short period of time can cause serious and possibly life threatening flooding.

Colorado Flood Safety and Wildfire Awareness Week continues through this Saturday.