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NEWS

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Now is the time to address home, community wildfire mitigation

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – With the ongoing drought, low snowpack, recent brush fires and Red Flag Warnings in effect along the Front Range today, the Colorado State Forest Service reminds landowners to prepare their homes now for possible wildfire.

“Although there is no guarantee firefighters will be able to save your home during a wildfire, the odds increase if you follow the best-available mitigation guidelines,” said Lisa Mason, outreach forester for the CSFS and Colorado’s “Are You FireWise?” program manager. “It’s a good idea to get started now, before wildfire danger increases this spring.”

The CSFS recently updated its two principal guides for protecting property from wildfire. “FireWise Construction: Site Design & Building Materials” and “Protecting Your Home from Wildfire: Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones” were developed by experts in the fields of wildfire behavior and FireWise construction practices.

Although much of the information in the guides was unmodified from previous years, several important changes were made based on lessons learned from recent wildfires in the wildland-urban interface. Among these changes is an added emphasis on:

- the ongoing need for year-round maintenance of surface fuels around the home, such as mowing grass and raking up thick beds of pine needles
- the importance of keeping gutters, decks and roofs free of pine needles and other combustibles year-round
- understanding how wildfires may start from burning ember showers, and not just direct heat and flame
- describing fuels mitigation in specific forest types

The revised property protection guidelines, as well as information on developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, are available at CSFS district offices or on the CSFS website at www.csfs.colostate.edu.

The Colorado State Forest Service continues to be the lead state agency for providing forest stewardship and wildfire mitigation assistance to private landowners, following legislation in 2012 that transferred responsibility for wildfire command and control from the CSFS to the newly formed Division of Fire Prevention and Control.