

Community Wildland Fire Forum

04/28/11

Questions & Answers

Q. In the Mountain Park Homes (subdivision) there were right of ways established as fictitious roads between lots with the trees thick and lots of undergrowth and downed trees/limbs and the county doesn't maintain them. What happens if these strips of land need mitigation in order to protect the adjacent homes?

A. Check with the county P & Z to see who the land belongs to and to establish if someone is responsible for it. If the neighbors are ok with it, go ahead and mitigate to protect the adjacent homes. If it belongs to the county then check with them to see if the land is scheduled for any mitigation.

Q. During high fire danger or a fire ban when I see someone throw a cigarette butt out of a car window it makes me really upset. What can I do about it?

A. Get their license plate number and vehicle description and call 911 so the County Sheriff's deputies can respond.

Q. Four Wheel drive roads in the national forest aren't blocked to prevent access when fire danger is high or there are bans. Why?

A. The forest service has to be under a fire ban for campfires and the like to be prohibited. Call the forest service about restrictions on activities that might cause sparks or fires.

Q. Can I burn my propane fire pit in my yard during a fire ban?

A. No, enclosed propane BBQ's only and it must be attended. No open flames.

Q. How do I find out what zone I live in from the CWPP mentioned during the presentation?

A. A copy of the CWPP is available at the EFPD Administration building to look at or you can look at the report and the appendices on our website at:

http://www.evergreenfirerescue.com/documents/efr_cwpp_report.pdf

http://www.evergreenfirerescue.com/documents/efr_cwpp_appendix.pdf

Q. If having a green belt around your home helps keep fire away what do you do if your well permit prohibits watering the landscaping?

A. Keep the grass cut extra short and create a strip of non-burn material around the structures like decks and foundations. (Note: mulch burns, gravel doesn't)

Q. If there is an evacuation what about my large animals?

A. When you need to evacuate large animals you can call the JeffCo Evacuation Assistance Team dispatched by the JeffCo 911 /Animal Control for assistance with moving the animals to the JeffCo fairgrounds. They are volunteers and donations are always welcome. It is a good idea to have your own animal evacuation plan in advance and work with your neighbors and friends to help each other.

Q. Because of population density in south Evergreen and limited roads in or out of the areas if there is an evacuation and I can't get through the traffic to get to someone who is at home what assurance can you give about evacuation routes?

A. Call 911 and tell them that someone is home alone in the evacuation area and that you can't get to them because of roads that are blocked or congested. An assessment will be made for the safety and removal of the person from the home.

Q. What do you do when your property abuts mountain parks owned by the state or city and mitigation is needed to help protect your property? Is mulch less or more volatile than pine needles and branches?

A. Most of the mountain parks are working on mitigation so contact the park to see if they are planning any mitigation for your area. Mulch being lower on the ground and often damp underneath will smolder versus taller fuel like branches which burn quicker and run faster. Pine needles are very dry fuel.

Q. Is it a good idea to put a sprinkler on your roof or deck and wet them down in front of an approaching fire like they do in California?

A. If you are on well water you will eventually run your well out depending on your flow or the electricity will be shut off in the area and your well pump won't work. A better use for the water is to save it for the hotspots once the fire blows past. If you spend time removing fuels from around the house like fire wood and keep your gutters clear of pine needles or similar flammables for a 30 foot radius around the structures that will create some defensible space. If you have wood shingle roofs consider replacing them. If you are unable to evacuate because the roads are blocked or the smoke is too thick then do what you can prior to the fire reaching the house to move flammables away. As the fire gets close get inside and get down on the floor and cover yourself. Once a fast moving fire passes the house then get back up and use your water to douse the spots on the house that may have caught on fire or in the immediate area to prevent them from continuing to feed the fire to trees or structures.

Q. What about leaving the house for an evacuation. Should I leave the doors locked or unlocked?

A. Leave a light on so we can find the house if the smoke gets really dense. How much else you do like turning off the gas at the meter or shutting off the electricity depends on how much time you have to evacuate. It is up to you if you lock your doors or not. If we need to take shelter in your home or building and it is locked we will force the door especially if we are in the path of the fire and need to take cover.

Q. For the structure fire in Kittredge in April we couldn't tell if it was structure or wild fire. How do we find out? Who do we call?

A. Start by registering your cell phone to get reverse 911 calls. If it had been a wild fire and evacuation was necessary you would have been notified. Check the media (TV and radio) if it's a wildfire the press will jump all over it on the news. If it's a structure fire they won't. Be aware of what is happening in your neighborhood and with your neighbors. Wild fire = gray billowing smoke. Structure fire = black plumes of smoke. Try not to tie up 911 with question calls that are nonemergency. If you heard sirens chances are we have responded to the fire and don't need a 911 report of smoke.

A. Captain Robert Baker of the JeffCo Sheriff's office: call and they will send a deputy on a smoke check during fires and bans. Deputies do go house to house during an evacuation to document that people are out and tag the house to indicate it's empty. Listen to what the deputy tells you to do, where to go for evacuation staging, and how much time you have to get out. Also know that if you have your telephone blocked to solicitors you will not get 911 reverse calls. They launch the 911 reverse multiple times; first is the warning, 2nd will come evacuate large animals.

Q. What about using a scanner to give you information about a fire?

A. Yes if it makes you feel better to listen. Do what works for you. After January 2012 all radio frequencies will be changing and a scanner may no longer be able to pick up 911 calls.

Q. What if I have multiple oxygen tanks in my home for the elderly person I care for?

A. Put a sign in a window or door prominently to let the firefighters know that there is something in the house that is dangerous like oxygen, acetylene, or other chemicals used in hobbies or work.

Q. What kinds of fires are mostly being seen?

A. Fires are being caused by downed power lines, extension cords to stock tank heater that mice chewed through, stove and fireplace ashes not being properly extinguished and disposed of. Seeing about 5 / 6 cigarette butt fire starts each year. Slash burns that are not completely out sometimes rekindle a week or so later. Most of the fires are caused by bad habits more often than not. We rely on the public to let us know when they see smoke or fire.

Q. What about the gel products that are being advertised to spray on homes?

A. Expensive and there are certain time intervals to using it for effectiveness. The fire department doesn't use it but private contractors do. It has mixed results. The homeowner can do it but do your research first about timing/ effectiveness.

Q. Should I mitigate wood mulch?

A. It is flat and usually damp so will smolder and have slower spread but still best to keep it away from your deck and foundation.

Q. Is there someone in the fire department to make a home visit and advise about defensible space?

A. Not at present. Use firewise.org or your insurance company for advice but be aware that the insurance company may raise your rates if they feel the fire risk is high. You can also contact a licensed fire mitigation company to review the property and make suggestions and then contact a tree removal company if needed. Jefferson County has a list of licensed fire mitigation companies.

Q. Is the CWPP only at the county level?

A. No if you live in Evergreen you are covered by the CWPP for Evergreen and Jefferson County.