

Dear Fellow Coloradan,

Colorado has repeatedly broken the "most destructive fire in state history" record over the past several years, from the High Park and Waldo Canyon fires of 2012 to the Black Forest Fire of 2013. This cycle of increasingly destructive fires has made it clear that the question is not if, but *when*, we'll have another catastrophic mega-fire.

Our state's persistent drought and unhealthy forests, combined with the harmful effects of climate change, ensure that we are one lightning strike, errant cigarette butt or arsonist's match away from another record wildfire season. And with roughly 40 percent of Coloradans living in the "wildland urban interface" (WUI) — the fire-prone areas where human development is close to or within natural terrain and flammable trees and brush — the risk for our communities will only continue to grow.

Wildfires are a natural phenomenon, but we can — and must — get ahead of the curve. From the U.S. Forest Service down to local homeowners, everyone has a role to prevent wildfires. And that's why I'm fighting for common-sense policies that help protect Colorado communities from the threat of wildfire, from safeguarding critical wildfire mitigation projects to helping the U.S. Forest Service acquire new air tankers to better contain blazes.



As we prepare for the upcoming wildfire season, I want to share these simple and effective ways you can protect your home and yard from wildfire if you live in the WUI:

- When working in your yard, create fuel-free zones 30 feet around your home by keeping it clear of twigs and leaves. Rakes and weed-whackers are some of the best tools we have to increase the likelihood that our homes will survive a wildfire.
- Store firewood and combustible materials, such as wooden lawn chairs and gas tanks, far away from your home.
- Regularly clean your roof and gutters to ensure dry debris doesn't build up.
- When selecting landscaping and plants to place near your home, make sure they will not become a hazard in the event of a fire.
- Contact your local planning and zoning office to see if your home is in a high-risk fire zone.
- Use the resources at <http://ct.symplicity.com/t/muv/df384d73a91e6fea287bb720988bee54/3955818184/realurl=http://www.ready.gov/wildfires> or <http://ct.symplicity.com/t/muv/df384d73a91e6fea287bb720988bee54/3955818184/realurl=http://www.csfs.colostate.edu/> and ensure your friends and neighbors have the information they need to protect their property, too.

Now is also the time to inventory your belongings and carefully review your homeowner's insurance policy to see what it covers. All you need is a few hours of spare time and a digital camera or camera phone. Store this information and any important receipts you can find online, in a safe deposit box or somewhere off-site. This is one of the best ways to financially protect yourself and help your family recover if your home is damaged or lost after a tragic fire. You can learn more about this process by visiting [the state of Colorado's disaster insurance website](#).

Wildfires will continue to be an unfortunate fact of life in Colorado. But by working together, we can take common-sense steps that reduce our risk. Please use these resources to be proactive and prepare for the upcoming wildfire season. And with Coloradans by my side, I'll continue to fight for cost-effective and smart policies that protect Colorado communities and our special way of life.

Warm regards,