



# WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS & FOREST HEALTH

## WHAT TO KNOW IN 2026

Wildfire risk is increasing across the Roaring Fork Valley, and proactive forest management is essential to protect our community, homes, and surrounding ecosystems. The City of Aspen has recently adopted updates to its wildfire mitigation policy to better align with state guidance and improve clarity for residents.

### KEY POLICY & MANAGEMENT UPDATES

#### **Wildfire Classification Areas**

Properties are now evaluated using wildfire intensity classifications aligned with the Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code (<https://dfpc.colorado.gov/sections/wildfire-resiliency-code-board>). These classifications help guide defensible space and vegetation management recommendations.

#### **CWRC Wildfire Hazard Mapping**

The CWRC [map](#) is used as a baseline tool to understand wildfire risk across the landscape and inform site-specific decisions.

#### **Tree Removal Near Structures**

Trees within **0–5 feet of structures** may be removed as part of defensible space practices without mitigation fees when consistent with wildfire mitigation guidance.

#### **Focus on Proactive Mitigation**

The updated [2026 Wildfire Mitigation Policy](#) emphasizes reducing wildfire risk through thoughtful vegetation management rather than reactive removal after hazards develop.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

Simple actions can significantly reduce wildfire risk:

- 🌳 Maintain **defensible space**, especially within 0–5 feet of your home.
- 🌳 Keep trees **well-spaced** and prevent canopy overlap near structures.
- 🌳 **Remove dead material** and ladder fuels.
- 🌳 Use **fire-resistant and drought-tolerant species** when planting.
- 🌳 Keep **trees healthy**. Healthy trees are more resilient to wildfire and health stressors.
  - Keep trees properly watered, even during drought, to reduce flammability.
  - Monitor for signs of stress, decline, or pest issues.
  - Avoid root disturbance and soil compaction.
  - Prune appropriately only when necessary to reduce fuel buildup. Trees do not heal as quickly when they are already stressed.
- 🌳 **Request a [Wildfire Risk Assessment](#)** with AFPD.
- 🌳 **Contact the City Forester or another local certified arborist** for guidance on evaluating and managing trees on their property.
  - Heather Gale, [heather.gale@aspen.gov](mailto:heather.gale@aspen.gov)
  - [ISA Certified Arborist Database](#)

## UPCOMING WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROJECTS & EVENTS

The City, in coordination with partners such as AFPD and ACES, will be implementing fuels reduction and forest health projects throughout 2026 and beyond. These projects are designed to reduce wildfire intensity and improve defensives space area and ecosystem resilience. Upcoming projects will be posted to the [Trees and Wildfire Mitigation](#) webpage.







- 🌳 **Shadow Mountain and Smuggler Mountain Areas**

Ongoing and planned fuels reduction work, including thinning and surface fuel treatment.
- 🌳 **Continued Expansion of Douglas-fir Beetle Treatments**

Additional project areas will be evaluated in coordination with partners and based on risk prioritization.
- 🌳 **Aspen Area Wildfire Preparedness Collaboration Event**
  - April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Aspen Fire Protection District Station at 420 East Hopkins.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE

Wildfire resilience is a shared responsibility. By combining thoughtful policy, proactive management, and community action, Aspen can continue to protect its forests, homes, and residents. Some additional resources available for community members include:

-  **Aspen Fire Protection District.** Schedule a Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) assessment to understand your property's wildfire risk and get site-specific recommendations. <https://www.aspenfire.com/reduce-your-risk>
-  **Colorado State Forest Service.** Science-based guidance on defensible space, tree care, and wildfire preparedness for Colorado conditions. <https://csfs.colostate.edu/live-wildfire-ready/>
-  **Roaring Fork Valley Wildfire Collaborative.** Local education, outreach, and potential grant funding for mitigation work. <https://www.rfwildfire.org/>
-  **Pitkin County Alerts.** Register your phone number and address to receive critical updates related to public safety. <https://member.everbridge.net/453003085612656/login>
-  **National Fire Protection Association.** National program with clear, easy-to-follow guidance for reducing wildfire risk around homes. <https://www.nfpa.org/>
-  **City of Aspen Forestry.** Contact the City Forester for help evaluating trees on your property, understanding defensible space, and making planting or removal decisions. <https://www.aspenrecreation.com/parks-trails/natural-resources-division/trees-and-wildfire-mitigation>