

What are the Options?

Set Objectives

Before you decide to do it yourself or hire a hazardous fuels reduction company, think about the objectives for your property.

Some questions to ask yourself:

- Do I have the time, tools, skill, and fitness to do the work myself?
- Do I have the finances to pay a contractor? How much am I willing to pay?
- How much fuels reduction work do I want done now and what can wait? Or do I want it all done at once? Remember — there will be yearly maintenance as vegetation grows back.
- How do I want the slash disposed of?
Chipped — scattered or piled for mulch
Hauled to the landfill
Burned in piles when weather permits
Lop and scatter



Other things to Consider

Do you have two acres or forty? You may want to concentrate your efforts close to structures the first year if you can't do the work all at once.

Is your house on flat ground or a steep slope? If it's on a steep slope, you'll want to increase the size of your defensible space below your house.

Do you have a long, winding, narrow driveway? You might want to cut trees along the driveway to improve access for emergency vehicles.

Do you have trees killed by beetle infestation? Contact the Colorado State Forest Service for advice, (970) 247-5250.

Do you want firewood? Your trees can be cut into firewood lengths.

Do you want lumber? Some companies have portable lumber mills.

FireWise Southwest Colorado

FireWise Southwest Colorado is a citizen-based council created to promote wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and education. For more information e-mail:

firewiseswcolorado@yahoo.com

Or visit this website:

www.southwestcoloradofires.org

For more information, contact:

- Your local fire department
- Colorado State Forest Service
(970) 247-5250
www.colostate.edu/depts/CSFS/
- Firewise
www.firewise.org/
- Firewise Colorado
www.firewise.org/co/



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Getting the Work Done

Wildfire.

Wildfires are common and recurring in southwest Colorado.

What can be done?

Defensible space is probably the single most important factor in saving a home from wildfire. Thinning out vegetation and removing burnable materials around homes creates defensible space.

Who can do the work?

Creating defensible space around your home can involve a lot of work. Many homeowners have the time, energy, and tools to do the job themselves. Others decide to hire hazardous fuel reduction companies to do the work for them.



Hazardous Fuels Reduction Companies

Questions to Ask

Is the company insured? A professional company carries both general liability and worker's compensation, to protect the client and their employees. A homeowner is liable for uninsured or underinsured contractors. Ask for certificates of liability which will be issued directly to the client from an insurance agency. A copy of an insurance binder is not the same as proof of current insurance.

Ask for an on-site inspection and estimate. Get a price quote from several companies. When you've decided on a company and agree with the cost, get an understandable contract for the work you want done.

Ask for references and check the company out. Potential questions when calling a reference:

- Was the crew reliable?
- Did they listen to your concerns about removing trees and fire danger?
- Did they accomplish what they said they would?
- Were you pleased with the work?
- Would you have them back?

Ask for a list of mitigated properties available for tour. It is difficult to visualize a property that has reduced fire risk. Visit sites that have been prepared for wildfire. Find out the method of work and the company that did the work to see if this is a desired outcome for your property.



What to do With the Slash

The biggest challenge facing homeowners is deciding how to deal with the slash (tree limbs, brush, etc.) created by hazardous fuels reduction. There are several options available.

Chipping — A portable chipper can be brought to your property to create wood chips from branches and small trees. The chips can be scattered across your property or piled to use as mulch. Chips will hold moisture, benefiting the remaining vegetation. Because of their small size, compactness and moisture content chips are not a significant fire hazard. Chips will tend to smolder and are easily extinguished, but should not be spread within ten feet of a structure.

Hauling — Slash can also be hauled to the local landfill. Landfills usually charge a fee.

Burning piles — Piles of slash can be stacked in strategic locations where burning them will not threaten remaining vegetation or structures. A meadow or large opening is ideal. Be-

fore burning the piles, contact your local fire department first and burn only when conditions are safe.

Lop and scatter — This process involves scattering the slash across the property. Slash should not be concentrated in one spot or piled too high. If a fire went through, it would stay close to the ground in the slash. This technique can be used on properties with larger acreage and should not be used near structures.



What to do With the Wood

The other byproduct from defensible space is wood. It can be cut into logs or shorter lengths ready to split for firewood. Some companies have portable mills and can create lumber from your trees. Talk with different hazardous fuels reduction companies to find out what options are available for slash and wood disposal.

For homeowners with a significant number of large trees available, the Colorado State Forest Service may be able to help set up a small commercial sale of the cut wood, allowing for some return on the money invested.

Do it Yourself

For a forested home, defensible space is as important as a good foundation.

If you decide to do the mitigation work yourself, be careful! Equipment such as chainsaws and brush chippers are dangerous. Use correct personal protective equipment, such as hard hats, safety glasses, ear plugs, saw chaps, and gloves. Follow all recommended safety precautions while using a chainsaw or brush chipper. Falling trees are dangerous and can be deadly if safe procedures are not followed.

Remember to drink plenty of water, especially during hot weather. Physical labor is exhausting. Don't overdo it.

If you decide to hire a mitigation company, the Colorado State Forest Service maintains a list of local providers, or you can access the list on-line at:

www.southwestcoloradofires.org

