COLORADO WILDFIRE RISK

Understanding the wildland-urban interface risk index

MESA COUNTY

Adapt. Prepare by Knowing Fire Risk

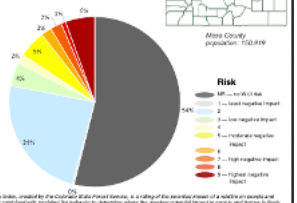
Each county in Colorado is unique, with a character shaped by historical history, land, climate, people and resources. However, something every county in the state shares is the potential to be negatively affected by wildfires.

In order to effectively prepare for the impact of wildfires, residents, leaders and community planners must be aware of the wildfire risk associated with living in the wildland-urban interface and recognize actions that can be taken to reduce this risk. Connecting with wildfire resources — like those listed below — can help guide wildfire adaptation efforts from a personal to a community-wide level.

WUI Risk

This chart shows the portion of Mesa County's residents who live within the wildland-urban interface classified by level of wildfire impact on lives and property.





THE DATA: *The Wildland Urban Interface Risk Index, created by the Colorado State Forest Service, is a rating of the potential impact of a wildfire on people and their homes. It is created using housing density combined with modeled fire behavior to determine where the greatest potential impact to people and homes is likely to occur. The index is calculated consistently for each Colorado county, available in the Colorado Forest Atlas of coloradowildfirerisk.org.*

WUI

The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is an area where structures or other human development meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation or fuels.

Approximately half of Colorado's population lives in the WUI. As of 2018, 2.9 million of the state's 5.7 million residents live in these vulnerable areas.

Wildfire Impact

Wildfires are a natural part of every ecosystem in Colorado. However, wildfire can also harm humans, improvements and health.

The impact a fire can have in any WUI location is determined primarily by ignitability of structures, natural vegetation (fuel) present, and the proximity of fuels to human improvements.

What Can Be Done?

There are many actions that can reduce wildfire risk. From homeowners establishing defensible space and hardening structures, to community-wide mitigation efforts and fire department risk assessments, to county-wide building code and regulation adoption. Programs exist to guide efforts to adapt to living with wildfire in Colorado.

Learn more

The Colorado State Forest Service offers more about wildfire mitigation at csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation.