



Crystal Park Volunteer Fire Department

#2 Waterfall Loop, Manitou Springs, CO 80829

Community Safety Bulletin #5



Spring Cleaning--Vital for Fire Safety

Spring cleaning is an annual ritual for many people. Just as the first crocus of spring ushers in a new beginning for nature, our spring cleaning habits signify a fresh start for us after the long winter months.

Spring cleaning can take on another meaning. It's the ideal time to check our homes and yards for dangerous materials and unsafe conditions and spend the time to protect our families and our properties.

Start by taking a few minutes to plan your safety clean up day. You will want to check each room in your house, including the attic and basement. Also, don't forget the garage, yard and storage shed.

Plan to do several different things, including:

- Remove all hazards.
- Check and correct things like frayed or damaged appliance cords, wiring, fuses or breakers.
- Remove stacks of paper & magazines
- Check for water leaks, especially near electrical appliances.
- Check for clearance between heating appliances & combustibles.
- Properly store flammable liquids and home chemicals.
- Make sure that gasoline and cleaning fluids are well marked and are out of the reach of children and pets. Store in a cool, dry place outside the house.
- Clean up work areas. Put dangerous tools, adhesives, matches or other work items away and out of any child's reach.
- Inventory all home and yard chemicals, paints and poisons. Store them according to their label. Properly dispose of any that are expired or leaking, but don't throw them in the trash or down the drain.
- Make sure that all chemicals are kept under lock and key and out of reach of children and pets.
- Check fire protection and safety equipment.
- Check your smoke detector and fire extinguishers.
- Make sure all doors and windows open easily for fast escapes.
- Make sure your street numbers are posted properly & are visible.
- Check and make sure you have a working flashlight and battery-powered radio for the approaching storm season.

The next thing people should do is plan their escape.

Sit down with your family and make sure that everyone knows what to do in the event of a fire. Make sure you have two ways out of every room and that you have a meeting place outside the house for the whole family.

Practice the plan. Even the best plan is no good if you don't practice it.

PROPANE GRILLS - The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that more than 500 fires and 20 injuries occur every year from gas grill fires & explosions of grills that have not been used in months.



- Check the tubes leading to the burner regularly for blockages. Check with your specific grill manufacturer's instructions.
- Check for leaks EVERY TIME you replace the cylinder. Pour soapy solution over the connections and if bubbles begin to form, there is a leak. If there is a leak, turn off the grill IMMEDIATELY and have it fixed. Do **NOT** use the grill until the leak is fixed.
- Make sure all the connections are secure BEFORE turning on the gas.
- Never start a propane grill with the lid closed. Gas can accumulate and when the grill is ignited may cause an explosion.
- Before getting a propane cylinder filled, check for any damages to it.
- Never store propane cylinders indoors or near any heat source.
- Never transport or store propane cylinders in the trunk of your automobile.
- ALWAYS shut off the propane fuel at the grill and at the bottle after you have finished barbecuing. Otherwise, this will lead to fire hazards, such as leaks and faulty regulators.

You can do a lot to protect yourself, your family and your property. In fact, you are the key to your safety. A little time spent on simple common sense prevention will do a lot to make your house a safer place.

The Crystal Park Fire Department is here to help. Anyone who would like to learn more ways to protect themselves all year long can visit the Department's website and Email any questions to the Chief.



Don't forget – Changing to Daylight Savings Time meant it's also time to change the batteries in your smoke detectors!



Merrill Kaufmann's dream of owning a mountain home came true in 1980 when he built his cabin west of Loveland, Colorado. That dream could have quickly perished when lightning ignited a fast-moving wildfire that burned within five feet of his cabin. But Kaufmann's story has a happy ending because he took the necessary precautions to protect his property from wildfire. Kaufmann's home has survived two major wildfires.



"My friends and neighbors refer to the cabin as the 'Miracle Cabin' because it has survived two wildfires."

Just days before the 1993 Snowtop Fire, Kaufmann was looking at a tree outside the dining room window and decided he needed to do more work to reduce fire risk. His efforts to thin trees around his property paid off big time—when the flames reached those trees, the fire stopped.

In 2000, the Bobcat Gulch Fire came within 35 yards of his cabin. When the fire reached the edge of the trees killed by the Snowtop Fire, it ran out of fuel and again the fire stopped.

"My friends and neighbors refer to the cabin as the 'Miracle Cabin' because it has survived two wildfires," Kaufmann said. But Kaufmann knows it was no miracle. His cabin survived because he took steps to mitigate fire hazards. He built the cabin with a metal roof, thinned trees 35 yards away from structures, removed shrubs and dead branches, mowed grass as far as 20 feet or more from the cabin and maintained a bare-soil buffer around the cabin and shed.

Clearing vegetation that could ignite and threaten the cabin during a wildfire is part of Kaufmann's annual ritual. It's a commitment he made when he decided to build his dream home in the woods. It's a commitment he believes other landowners should make in order to protect their families, their homes, their neighbors, the lives of firefighters and Colorado's forests.

"It is possible to live safely and harmoniously with nature, and to do so without high risk and without major disruption to our forest lands," said Kaufmann. "It's a responsibility that comes with the privilege of living in or near our forests. And it's the right thing to do."

How can I slow a wildfire headed for my home?

Defensible Space: To create a defensible space around your home, remove or reduce flammable vegetation and replace it with less flammable plants. Depending on slope and vegetation, defensible space should be between 30 and 200 feet. Guidelines are at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/library/pdfs/fire/LWF51303.pdf>

Trees: Reduce the number of trees in heavily wooded areas and prune branches of trees within the defensible space to 10 feet above the ground.

Branches: Remove branches that overhang the roof or come within 15 feet of the chimney. Clean all dead leaves and needles from the roof, gutters and yard.

Flammables: Locate woodpiles and LPG tanks at least 30 feet from all structures and clear away flammable vegetation within 10 feet of woodpiles and propane tanks.

Roof: Install a roof with a fire classification of "Class A." Cover the chimney outlet and stovepipe with nonflammable screening no larger than half-inch mesh.

Windows: Install dual-or triple-pane windows, and limit the size and number of windows that face large areas of vegetation.

How can I help firefighters save my home?

Make it easy for firefighters to get to your home.

Roads must be wide enough to accommodate fire trucks and provide a place for them to turn around. Driveways must be strong enough to carry emergency vehicles.

Identify at least two exit routes from your house and make sure they're well marked. All access routes to your home should be free of low-hanging tree branches and cleared of flammable vegetation at least 10 feet from roads and five feet from driveways.

Proximity to a quality fire department with well-trained firefighters is one of the greatest considerations that your insurance carrier will use to determine your homeowners insurance premium.

Maintain an emergency water supply that meets fire department standards, such as a community water hydrant system, a cooperative emergency storage tank you share with neighbors or a minimum storage supply of 2,500 gallons on your property.

If your water comes from a well, consider an emergency generator to operate the pump during a power failure. Clearly mark all water sources, and create easy access to your closest emergency water source.

Contact the Crystal Park Volunteer Fire Department for a FREE FireWise assessment of your home or membership site.