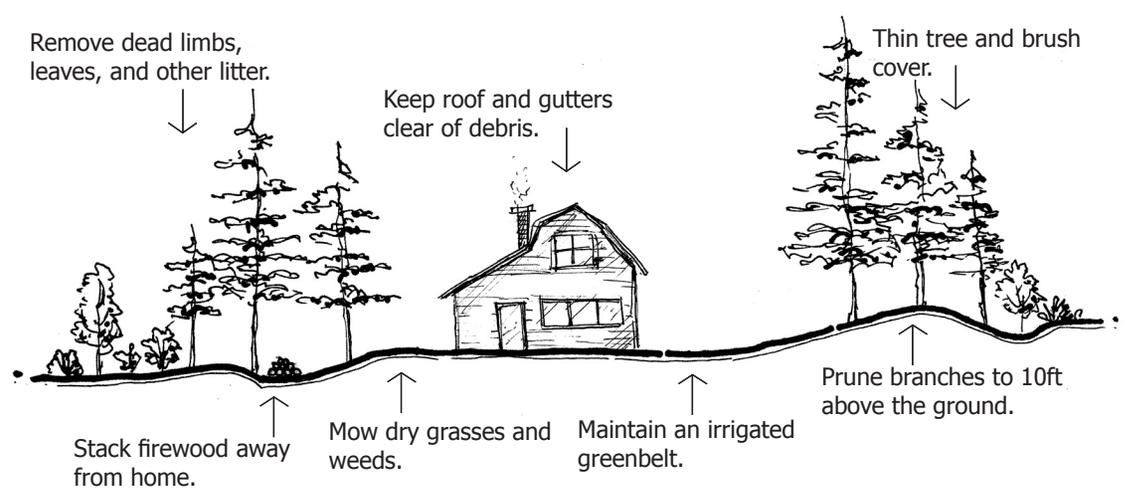


wildland fires

A wildland fire is a fire occurring on relatively undeveloped and often public land. There are three classes of wildland fire. Surface fires are the most common and burn slowly along the ground, damaging and killing trees. A ground fire is usually started by lightning and burns on or below the forest floor. A crown fire is fueled by trees and burns quickly as it spreads along the tops of the trees (Federal Emergency Management Agency 3 Dec. 2004).

There is a trend toward residential development expanding into wildland environments throughout the West. This trend is creating an expansion of the wildland/urban interface where structures are located near large amounts of vegetation. Development in these areas is vulnerable to destruction if a wildland fire should occur in the surrounding area. Further, if a fire does occur and development is spared, it is still prone to damage from landslides, mudflows, and flooding that often follow fire (National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program 13 Dec. 2004).

Defending development from wildland fires is not only costly, but risky as well. The best mitigation for structural damage by wildland fire is to keep development away from fuels such as stands of trees and undergrowth. In areas where this is impossible or impractical, steps may be taken to reduce the risks to property and lives. Steps include removing dead limbs and leaves from around development, maintaining an irrigated greenbelt, mowing dry grasses and weeds, and reducing the density of surrounding vegetation (Colorado State Forest Service 1 Dec. 2004).



Tips for protecting your home from wildland fire from the Colorado State Forest Service.

references and further reading:

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