

# Defensible Space Requirements in Boulder County for 2019

Boulder County has amended the wildfire mitigation requirements in its building code. Effective January 1, 2016, these amendments impact both 1) ignition-resistant construction and 2) defensible space requirements. This handout describes the defensible space provisions that apply to projects in Wildfire Management Zone 1. [View map](#). If you have any questions, please contact a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist at 303-441-3926.

The amendments provide two options for completing Boulder County's defensible space requirements: 1) obtaining a Wildfire Partners Certificate and 2) complying with the regulatory requirements within the building code. Please note—the specifics for creating defensible space for both options are **different** depending on the type of project you are undertaking. When it comes to the county's defensible space requirements, there are five different types of projects and four handouts explaining these different requirements: 1) new homes—see Handout One, 2) decks only—see Handout Two, 3) additions greater than 200 square feet that require a planning process—see Handout Three, 4) additions greater than 200 square feet where no planning process is required—see Handout Four, and 5) additions or remodels less than 200 square feet (most of these projects are exempt from these requirements so there is no handout). It is important to note that wildfire mitigation may be required for some additions undergoing a planning process, even if the addition is less than 200 square feet. To determine if your project requires a planning process, please speak with a planner at the Boulder County Land Use Department at 303-441-3930.

Boulder County has two options for defensible space so residents can choose the path that best meets their needs and individual circumstances. However, the standards used to mark trees and the Wildfire Mitigation Specialists conducting the on-site tree markings are exactly the same for both options. The major differences between the two paths rest in the **additional benefits and requirements** for applicants who choose the Wildfire Partners option. **Applicants must select their preferred path after they submit their building permit application. The wildfire assessment must be conducted prior to the issuance of a permit.**

Launched in 2014, Wildfire Partners is a collaborative program—with over 40 partners—to help homeowners prepare for wildfire. Wildfire Partners is funded by Boulder County, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, and Federal Emergency Management Agency. In its first five years, over 1,800 homeowners participated in the program. More information is available at [www.WildfirePartners.org](http://www.WildfirePartners.org).

The Wildfire Partners Certificate path offers several benefits to homeowners:

- 1) Wildfire Partners educates homeowners about wildfire behavior, mitigation and preparedness and empowers them to take action to reduce their risk and help create more resilient communities
- 2) The Wildfire Partners Certificate helps homeowners obtain insurance
- 3) The Wildfire Partners Certificate helps homeowners sell their homes
- 4) Wildfire Partners provides on-going technical assistance, support, and recognition to homeowners
- 5) Wildfire Partners includes re-certification to assist with insurance and the sale of homes in the future
- 6) In 2019, we have limited grant funding to subsidize the cost of the assessment and tree marking so the Wildfire Partners Fee is \$300 (compared to \$350 for the regulatory path).

**Applicants with existing homes who select the Wildfire Partners Certificate option (Handouts 2, 3 and 4) must also mitigate their existing structures if they are vulnerable to ignition from wind-blown embers. This can be accomplished by implementing certain retrofits such as installing flashing, screening vents, patching holes in siding, among others (see Defensible Space FAQ for more information).** These homeowners must also fill out an online application, actively participate in the on-site assessment and tree marking, and complete the Wildfire Partners Survey and Reporting Form. Both paths require homeowners to maintain their defensible space.

# Handout 1

## Defensible Space Options for New Homes Requiring a Planning Process

### 2019

| Frequently Asked Questions   | Option 1:<br>Wildfire Partners Certificate   | Option 2:<br>Regulatory Wildfire   |
|--|--|--|
| What standard is used?   | Colorado State Forest Service  | Colorado State Forest Service  |
| Who conducts an assessment of the property and marks trees and other vegetation for removal? | A Wildfire Mitigation Specialist will be assigned to you   | A Wildfire Mitigation Specialist who is assigned to you or a homeowner who is a certified forester <sup>1</sup>          |
| What education does the homeowner receive?   | The homeowner is required to participate in the on-site assessment with the Wildfire Mitigation Specialist | The homeowner may participate in the on-site assessment with the Wildfire Mitigation Specialist or send a representative |
| How much does the assessment and marking cost?   | \$300  | \$350  |
| Who removes the vegetation?  | Any Forestry Contractor or the applicant   | Any Forestry Contractor or the applicant   |
| How much does the tree removal cost?   | Different for each property. These individuals are NOT eligible for financial support                      | Different for each property. These individuals are NOT eligible for financial support                                    |
| Who inspects the work?   | Typically, the Wildfire Mitigation Specialist who performed the original assessment                        | Typically, a Boulder County Wildfire Mitigation Specialist <sup>2</sup>  |
| How much does the inspection cost?   | \$0  | \$0  |
| What documentation does the homeowner receive?   | A Wildfire Partners Assessment Report  | A Wildfire Mitigation Plan   |
| What paperwork is the homeowner required to submit?  | Wildfire Partners Survey and Reporting Form  | None   |
| What recognition does the homeowner receive?   | A Wildfire Partners Letter, Certificate and Yard Sign  | None   |
| What are the maintenance requirements?   | Wildfire Partners agree to perform on-going maintenance  | Boulder County's Building Code requires defensible space be maintained at all times                                      |

<sup>1</sup> The accepted certification is provided by the Society of American Foresters.

<sup>2</sup> Boulder County's Wildfire Mitigation Specialists will inspect the plans written by homeowners who are certified foresters.