

# **Falls Creek Ranch Association**

## **National Fire Safety Standards and Recommendations**

### **2022**

Research tells us that most homes ignite during a wildfire because of embers or small flames. There are steps that homeowners can take to reduce the risk, with the most important efforts occurring on and immediately around the home. Likewise, Falls Creek Ranch residents and guests have a responsibility to take steps to reduce or eliminate any possibility of creating or adding to a hazardous condition that could impact the health, safety and welfare of FCR private or common property, as well as neighboring forest lands.

#### **Following are fire safety standards all residents and guests should be aware of:**

- **If you see smoke on or outside of the Ranch property, immediately call La Plata Emergency Operations Call Center: **970-385-8700** to report smoke and location.**
- **Register with La Plata County Code Red alert system here:**  
<https://public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BFEA18547A8D>

#### **Your Home:**

1. Learn how to be Firewise around your home and property. This includes using fire resistant construction materials and creating defensible space around your home.
2. Reduce ember ignition possibilities by keeping below decks/porches clear of flammable materials and vegetation. Screen exterior soffit and attic vents with 1/4" (or less) wire mesh screening to prevent embers from entering your home.
3. Remove pine needles, pine cones, leaves from roofs, gutters and around your home foundation. Prune low-hanging tree branches to at least 15 feet off the ground. Remove shrubs away from your home. Create fuel breaks with hardscape landscaping (gravel, rocks, boulders). Store firewood away from structures.
4. Contact the FCR Firewise Committee to review your property with you to create a plan to increase fire safety on your property and surrounding common property.
5. Realize that ANY open flame can create a hazardous condition for you and your neighbors. Do not burn anything outdoors if possible.

#### **Outdoor Burning:**

1. FCR residents and guests are required to comply with all fire restrictions, bans or weather/red flag warnings as enacted by La Plata County, San Juan National Forest, National Weather Service or FCR.
2. Wood burning is strongly discouraged. Duraflame logs (or other composite manufactured logs) are encouraged instead of wood to eliminate embers. Only burn seasoned, dry wood otherwise.
3. Strongly consider converting an existing wood burning fireplace/portable firepit to propane gas. Conversion kits are available at local home stores or on-line and are relatively inexpensive. While the use of gas-burning units is not without some risk, the presence of no sparks, embers, smoke or air quality concerns far outweighs the risk of wood fires.
4. Be aware that wood-burning units or wood pellet smokers produce smoke that can be a health concern or nuisance to neighbors. Please be considerate of each other; pay attention to wind direction.
5. For all fire units, keep a distance of at least three feet from children and pets. Many fires are started, and injuries occur, from children, pets and wildlife running and knocking into burning units.

6. Keep fire units at least 15 feet from combustible structures and vegetation. Be aware that combustible materials include items such as wood decking and railings, leaves, pine needles, pine cones, low-hanging branches, wood mulch, paper, magazines, clothing, etc.
7. People may often sit on the edge or very near fireplaces/firepits. If clothing catches fire, remember: stop, drop to the ground and roll to suffocate the flames. Cover your face with your hands. Use cool water on the person to protect the burned skin. Seek medical help if needed.
8. Consider battery-operated, flameless candles for outdoor use. Much safer than open flames.
9. Portable firepits and chimeneas should only be used on decks if the deck is of non-combustible material and accommodates the 15-foot safety zone.
10. Avoid using wood-burning firepits and chimeneas under a covered patio/deck since floating embers could reach the ceiling and catch it on fire. Gas firepits are easier to control. A covered patio/deck should have open sides to allow heat to dissipate without damaging the space.
11. No flame should be higher than one foot tall for safety.
12. A fire extinguisher (class A-B-C is recommended for homeowners) or other extinguishing material, such as a bucket of dirt/sand, water barrel, garden hose or shovel should be within easy reach for immediate use as needed.

### **Grilling/Smokers Safety:**

1. July is the peak month for grill fires (17%), including structure, outdoor or unclassified fires, followed by June (14%), May (13%) and August (12%).
2. In 2013-2017, an average of 19,000 patients per year went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills. Half (9,300 or 49%) of the injuries were thermal burns, including both burns from fire and from contact with hot objects.
3. Children under five accounted for an average of 2,000 or 38%, of the contact-type burns per year. These burns typically occurred when someone, often a child, bumped into, touched or fell on the grill, grill part or hot coals.
4. Gas grills were involved in an average of 8,700 home fires per year, including 3,600 structure fires and 5,100 outdoor fires annually. Leaks or breaks were primarily a problem with gas grills. Eleven percent of gas grill structure fires and 23% of outside gas grill fires were caused by leaks or breaks.
5. Charcoal or other solid-fueled grills were involved in 1,100 home fires per year, including 600 structure fires and 500 outside fires annually.

*(Above Source: NFPA's Research, Data & Analytics Division)*

6. Grills/smokers should be placed well away from combustible materials including wood decks and railings, overhangs and overhanging branches.
7. Grills should always have a covering lid and should always be attended by an adult.
8. Gas grills should be turned off immediately after you're finished grilling.
9. Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup on the grill and the tray below the grill. Bears smell your cooking and grease fat a mile away!
10. Charcoal ash should cool before being disposed of. Place ashes in a covered metal container. Keep the container at least 10 feet away from the home and other structures. Dispose of cooled ashes in a trash bag into the Ranch trash dumpsters.
11. All grills/smokers should be fully extinguished before leaving for the day.

### **Professional Agency Fire Alerts/Warnings:**

1. Learn how fire alerts and danger levels are determined and announced to the public.
2. We essentially live in a forest. Fire danger levels are determined by the US Department of Agriculture – Forest Service (USDA – FS), LaPlata County (Office of Emergency Management, Sheriff, Commissioners, Durango Fire) and the National Weather Service. These agencies work together to evaluate weather patterns; moisture levels of forest vegetation; wind, temperature, and humidity levels that all contribute to a specific level of fire danger for us. FCR is required to comply with any fire restrictions put into effect by these agencies. FCR Board may enact further restrictions at any time as deemed necessary for safety of residents and property.

### **Sources:**

National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) <https://www.nfpa.org/>

NFPA – Firewise USA <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Firewise-USA-Resources>

Wildfire Adapted Partnership, SW Colorado <https://www.wildfireadapted.org/>

International Fire Code Council <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IFC2021P1>

International Association of Fire Chiefs <https://www.iafc.org/>