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NEWS

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Black Forest Fire Anniversary Highlights Need for Mitigation Efforts to Protect Homes

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – This week marks the one-year anniversary of the Black Forest Fire – the most destructive wildfire in state history, in terms of property losses – and the Colorado State Forest Service wants to remind landowners to prepare for wildfires before they arrive.

While there is no guarantee firefighters will be able to save any one home from a wildfire, the odds increase if landowners create defensible space, said Lisa Mason, the Fire Adapted Communities program manager for the CSFS.

Defensible space is the area around homes or other structures that has been modified to reduce fire hazard. Addressing defensible space not only reduces the risk of home loss, but also improves safety for residents if they have to evacuate and for emergency crews responding to a wildfire.

“Homeowners working together around adjacent homes and throughout communities will be even more effective at reducing wildfire risk,” Mason said.

The CSFS offers numerous resources and recommendations to help private landowners create defensible space, including:

- Remove all flammable vegetation within at least 15 feet of any part of a home or other structure, including decks.
- Thin standing trees within 100-200 feet of all structures.
- Prune off tree branches to a height of at least 10 feet from the ground.
- Keep grasses and weeds surrounding the home mowed to a height of less than six inches.
- Stack firewood and locate propane tanks at least 30 feet from and uphill of structures.
- Clear pine needles from gutters and trim overhanging branches.

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CSFS online resources include free publications about defensible space, FireWise design and construction, Community Wildfire Protection Plans and the Firewise Communities/USA® program.

For comprehensive guidance on protecting homes and communities from wildfire, visit the CSFS website at www.csfs.colostate.edu or call a local CSFS district office.