

Colorado State Forest Service Salida District Wildfire Risk Ratings - Key Definitions



The wildfire risk rating key is based on a fire with moderate fire behavior - moderate rates of spread are expected with mainly surface fire and occasional torching of trees.

- **Address Visible** – If you are standing on the street side, the address needs to be visible and reflective. Reflective enhances visibility in the dark and/or under smoky conditions.
- **Access** – Is the driveway wide enough for fire trucks to enter and exit, are trees and branches adequately cleared for access by fire and emergency equipment, and is there more than one point of entry/exit for evacuating the property. This a rating for each home, not the entire subdivision.
- **Slope** – What is the percent of grade and the aspect where the house is located? When examining the slope, use the average slope of the lot that is around the structure. A structure located at the top of a slope is potentially more at risk than at the bottom of a slope.
- **Background Fuels** – Vegetation - the trees, shrubs, grasses and other flammable vegetation that are in zone 2 and zone 3. Zone 2 is 30 to 100 feet beyond the home, and zone 3 is 100 to 300 feet beyond the home.
- **Defensible Space** – Defensible space is the area around a home or other structure that has been modified to reduce fire hazard. In this area, natural and manmade fuels are treated, cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire.
- **Class A: non-combustible** – Effective against severe fire test exposures, as classified by the Universal Building Code (UBC). Under such exposures, roof coverings of this class are not readily flammable, afford a fairly high degree of fire protection to the roof deck, do not slip from position, and are not expected to produce flying brands. Examples of Class A materials include cement shingles or sheets, exposed concrete slab roof, ferrous or copper shingles or sheets, slate shingles, clay or concrete roofing tile, asphalt shingles.
- **Class B:** Effective against moderate fire test exposures, as classified by the Universal Building Code (UBC). Under such exposures, roof coverings of this class are not readily flammable, afford a moderate degree of fire protection to the roof deck, do not slip from position, and are not expected to produce flying brands.
- **Class C:** Effective against light fire test exposure, as classified by the Universal Building Code (UBC). Under such exposures, roof coverings of this class are not readily flammable, afford a measurable degree of fire protection to the roof deck, do not slip from position, and are not expected to produce flying brands. Examples of Class C materials include wood shakes and shingles.
- **Other Combustibles** – Firewood, lumber, wooden deck furniture, etc. Anything that would be receptive to ignition during an ember shower.
- **Decking and Fencing** – What is the combustibility of the decking/fencing attached to the structure? Non-combustible decking/fencing is constructed out of non-combustible composite decking material; not all composites are non-combustible. For this assessment, if the deck has wood support beams with a non-combustible composite decking on top it is still considered to be non-combustible. Combustible decking/fencing includes an all wood deck or fence.
- **Water Source** - Water sources need to be available to wildland firefighting engines from outside the county. In the event of a large fire, we will have engines from outside the county and outside the state. To connect into the cisterns, you need the correct sized adaptors. These adaptors are not common in wildland firefighting. Outside resources may or may not have the adaptors so cisterns are not considered as a water source. Rivers, streams, and ponds, are considered as water sources if they are accessible, if they could be drafted from (meaning they were deep enough), and if they were close by. Water hydrants are also considered as a water source.
- **Other** – Items that were not captured in the risk rating key that may increase the wildfire danger, such as firewood stored on a deck or combustible material stored close to the structure.

Structure Triage Definitions:

The structure triage rating is based on a fire with moderate fire behavior. In the event of a wildland fire, the structure triage rating is designed to assist wildland firefighters and emergency responders with the triage of structures. The structure triage rating is also an educational tool for the homeowner. It will help the homeowner have a better understanding during a wildfire event what type of action might be taken by wildland firefighters and emergency responders.

Defensible – Standalone

- Determining Factor: There is a safety zone present. A safety zone is an area cleared of flammable materials used for escape in the event the line is outflanked or in case a spot fire causes fuels outside the control line to render the line unsafe. Safety zones can be used with relative safety by firefighters and their equipment in the event of a blowup in the vicinity.
- Size-up: Structure has very few tactical challenges.
- Tactics: Firefighters may not need to be directly assigned to protect structure as it is not likely to ignite during initial fire front contact. However, no structure in the path of a wildfire is completely without the need of protection. Patrol following the passage of the fire front will be needed to protect the structure.

Defensible – Prep and Hold

- Determining Factor: Safety zone present.
- Size-up: Structure has some tactical challenges.
- Tactics: Firefighters needed onsite to implement structure protection tactics during fire front contact.

Non-Defensible – Prep and Leave

- Determining Factor: NO safety zone present.
- Size-up: Structure has some tactical challenges.
- Tactics: Firefighters are not able to commit to stay and protect the structure. If time allows, rapid mitigation measures may be performed. Firefighters must set trigger point for safe retreat. Remember, pre-incident preparation is the responsibility of the homeowner. Patrol following the passage of the fire front will be needed to protect the structure.

Non-Defensible – Rescue Drive-By

- Determining Factor: NO safety zone present.
- Size-up: Structure has significant tactical challenges.
- Tactics: Firefighters are not able to commit to stay and protect the structure. If time allows, check to ensure that people are not present in the threatened structure (especially children, elderly, and invalid). Firefighters set trigger point for safe retreat. Patrol following the passage of the fire front will be needed to protect the structure.

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