

CCME WILDFIRE MITIGATION NEWSLETTER



Neighbors Helping Neighbors Mitigate for Wildfire Risk When ONE of us mitigates, we ALL benefit!



Thank you to everyone who volunteered this year to help mitigate, to Fire Chief Hawkins and his awesome firefighters, and to the CCME Board for their support!

New Name, New Members, New Plans, and New Energy

BY RHONDA HOECKLEY

The CCME Wildfire Mitigation Committee is excited to announce that it is evolving and growing in both size and mission! We have a new name, new members (and we are still looking for more), and robust plans for new wildfire mitigation programs for 2026 and beyond.

Our new name is the **CCME Wildfire Mitigation Action Team**, a name chosen to better convey that we are building a bigger team focused on taking more concrete actions to help you, CCME property owners, make your homes and land safer from wildfires.

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Suzanne Adams and Loren Gollhardt, CCME's long-time wildfire mitigation leaders, are excited to introduce the CCME Wildfire Mitigation Action Team members (your neighbors):

Suzanne Adams – Team Co-Chair

Loren Gollhardt – Team Co-Chair

Emmett Skiles – Communications/Newsletter Co-Chair

Rhonda Hoeckley – Communications/Newsletter Co-Chair

Phil Gilchrist - Home Wildfire Risk Assessment Coordinator

Erica Gilchrist - Member at large

Sharon Findlay - Member at large

Stephen Hoeckley - Member at large

Roger Klapp - Member at large

Naomi Mendoza - Member at large

James Toller - Member at large

Please consider joining us! The more volunteers we have, the more mitigation we can get done. And more mitigation makes us all safer from wildfires. For info on the new things the team has planned, check out the articles in the rest of the newsletter!





Big 2026 Plans with the Budget to Support Them

BY RHONDA HOECKLEY

Ready for action?! The CCME Wildfire Mitigation Action Team has big plans for 2026 (with a CCME board-approved budget) which will directly make all our homes safer from wildfire. Below is a quick preview of some of what the team will be doing next year:

- **Chipping Days Program** – The team will continue our popular chipping program, but we hope to add another day next year. Check our spring 2026 newsletter for how to sign up. (See photos and details of this year’s successful chipping days later in this newsletter.)
- **Home Wildfire Risk Assessment Program** – Early in 2026, Fire Chief Chris Hawkins of the Four Mile Fire Protection District will be training/certifying volunteers on our team to perform formal Home Wildfire Risk Assessments (the same assessments the Chief does on request). Once certified, our volunteers will do all CCME risk assessments (under the Chief’s supervision) so more CCME owner properties can be assessed next year without being limited by the Chief’s busy schedule keeping 19 different subdivisions fire safe.

The assessments evaluate:

- Home Hardening: Modifying a structure to make it more resistant to ignition
- Defensible Space: An area about 100 feet around the structure where combustibles have been removed/altered to reduce wildfire risk

If you have insurance issues, Chief Hawkins will still be the one to contact your insurance company post-assessment on your behalf. We’ll send out assessment sign-up details after our volunteers are certified.

Wildfire Mitigation Assistance Program for CCME Homeowners – We realize that as important as wildfire mitigation is, some of our owners are not able to do mitigation work themselves (due to age or physical disability) and cannot afford to hire a professional.



To help those owners, our team of volunteers will do mitigation work for those who qualify. We will explain how we prioritize in a future newsletter.

In the spring, designated team members will be taking a chainsaw safety class through the Four Mile Fire Protection District so that, along with our other volunteers, we will be able to create home defensible spaces in Zones 1 & 2 (0 to 30 feet) for those who qualify for help. The work will include:

- Removing trees
- Trimming/Limbing up tree branches to 10 feet or more, or half the height of tree, whichever is less
- Removing vegetation
- Raking and removing pine needles
- Removing stumps/debris
- Stacking slash for chipping days

Work crews will use equipment just purchased through this year's CCME Fire Mitigation Committee budget (see later article for list).

CCME residents who meet the eligibility criteria – unable to complete mitigation work themselves due to age or physical disability and not able afford to hire a professional – should contact Suzanne Adams (303-588-2016 or Suzanne.Adams@ucdenver.edu) in January to receive an application for wildfire mitigation assistance. The number of owners helped will be dependent on time and resources.

Our team has other ideas it is working on for 2025, as well. Stay tuned!

We Have New Equipment!

The CCME Fire Mitigation Action Team used the remainder of its fire mitigation budget for 2025 to buy a number of items to support our 2026 programs, including:

- **Safety Gear:**
 - Personal Protection Equipment including hard hats, chainsaw safety helmets with face shields, safety glasses, leather gloves, ear protection, chaps, sonic blast whistles, air horns, first aid kit, etc.



• **Equipment:**

- Chainsaws (2, Stihl MS 291, Cripple Creek Ace Hardware)
- Chains 2-in-1 Filing guide (1, Cripple Creek Ace Hardware)
- Chainsaw chains (2, Cripple Creek Ace Hardware)
- Weed string trimmer with battery and charger (1)
- Extra weed string trimmer battery (1)
- Pole saw (1, 40v)
- Pole saw battery (1 2-pack)
- Rakes (4)
- Shovels (4)
- Storage cabinet (1)

• **Clothing:**

- High visibility volunteer T-shirts (20)
- High visibility vests (6, sizes 3L, 3XL)
- Volunteer hats (20)

In addition, the CCME Board will check with the company that CCME uses for current fire extinguishers to add 2 more to that account, Craig Waylath will be donating 2 gas cans and chain lube, and Ken Blohowiak will donate 1 pruner.

We're ready for 2026. Bring on the mitigation!

Chipping Days 2025 a Great Success

BY RHONDA HOECKLEY

Big thanks to the CCME property owners who signed up to have your slash piles chipped, to Four Mile Fire Protection District for providing the chipper and fire crew personnel, and to our wonderful CCME volunteers who helped each chipping day! Due to all these folks, the 2025 Chipping Days was a very successful event. Here are the stats from the different chipping days:

Work Crew & Equipment



Clearing Slash on Coburg Lane





Results for May 23 and 24:

- **Where:** Chipped slash leftover from 2024 Team Rubicon Project on common area near Crystal Road and on Coburg Lane in Filing 23; Mountain Life Church property on Teller 1 across from high-risk CCME common area in Filing 23
- **Totals:** 189 piles chipped; 157.5 volunteer hours (Four Mile Fire Crew members plus CCME volunteers)
- **May Chipping Days CCME Volunteers:** Loren Gollhardt, Bill Martin, Emmett Skiles, Larry Rauh, Russ Shepherdson, Victor Lewis, Rob Tagliabochi, Andrew McGraw, Suzanne Adams, Lisa Smith (CCME office staff)

Before (5-23-25)



After (5-23-25)



Work Crew (5-24-25)



Work Crew (7-26-25)



Results for July 25 and 26

- **Where:** Owner properties
- **Totals:** 73 piles chipped; 114 volunteer hours (Four Mile Fire Crew members plus CCME volunteers)
- **July Chipping Days CCME Volunteers:** Loren Gollhardt, Phil Gilchrist, Brian Kemp, Larry Rauh, Gary & Becky Harrison, Antonio Guerrero, Roger Klapp, Naomi Mendoza, Dory Seal

Results for September 26

- **Where:** Owner properties
- **Totals:** 50+ piles chipped; 50.5 volunteer hours (Four Mile Fire Crew members plus CCME volunteers)
- **September Chipping Days CCME Volunteers:** Loren Gollhardt, Roger Klapp, Suzanne Adams

CHECK OUR SPRING NEWSLETTER FOR HOW TO SIGN UP FOR THE 2026 CHIPPING DAYS.



Disposing of Fireplace or Woodstove Ashes

BY LOREN GOLLHARDT

Do you heat your house with a wood stove or occasionally enjoy a crackling fire in the cold winter months? If you do, do you dump your ashes outside? Well, dumping your ashes outside is a no good, bad, terrible, horrible and just rotten idea. Many people believe that the ashes are completely cold and it will do no harm to dump them outside in the snow in the winter. After all, it is cold and fires don't burn very well in the cold so the chances of something happening are low. Right? Even if some ashes were a little warm, as soon as it hits the snow it will fizzle right out. Right?

The truth is, dumping your ashes outside in the snow is deadly. Every year our firefighters put out fires in peoples' yards that are started by the ashes they dumped a few hours ago, or even yesterday or the day before. You could be the guy whose ashes set your house on fire, spread to your neighbor's house, climb into the canopy, and start a catastrophic wildfire.

