



Genesee

FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Jefferson county commissioners recently established the Wildfire Risk Reduction Task Force to create “a thoughtful, collaborative approach among Jefferson County stakeholders to review and make recommendations on matters related to wildfire prevention, mitigation and related matters, including public safety and forest health.”

The task force held its first meeting November 7. Presentations focused on the risks and unique challenges we face in Jefferson County:

- Based on insurance company ratings, of the 10 counties in the U.S. with the highest risk of a catastrophic wildfire, only two are outside of California. Jefferson County is one of the two. The insurance industry estimates that Jefferson County has 40,800 homes at *very high* or *extreme* wildfire risk.
- Our risk is a function of the significant development that has occurred, and continues to occur, in forested mountain communities like Genesee, where both the topography and fuel load contribute to the fire risk. In addition, our weather (low humidity, high wind events and lightning strikes) make fire starts and rapid spread a significant possibility.
- The need for possible evacuation was not a consideration when most of the mountain communities were built and could pose significant life safety issues. A Paradise-like fire, including issues associated with evacuation, is a real possibility in many of our mountain communities.
- About two-thirds of Jefferson County is in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), but the non-WUI areas are still at risk for fire starts from ember flow from a wildfire (embers can travel up to a mile) and from degradations to air quality and watershed health resulting from a wildfire.

The stakeholders represented on the task force include county officials, mountain area fire chiefs and firefighters, the U.S. and Colorado State Forest Service, Denver Water and Denver Mountain Parks, the Jefferson County Conservation District and community and business representatives. The commitment to a collaborative approach presents an opportunity for consistent messaging, identification of potential funding sources and innovative approaches to reducing wildfire risk in the county.

One thing, however, is very clear: As residents, we need to take a proactive approach to protecting our property and our lives. In a catastrophic wildfire, our mountain fire departments, as good as they are, won't have the resources to defend every house and evacuation could become an issue, so each of us needs to have an emergency plan in place and be prepared to evacuate on a moment's notice.

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Wildfire Risk Reduction Task Force Members and Genesee Fire Board Members
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Important Links and Resources:

- Jefferson County Sheriff's Office:
 - <https://www.jeffco.us/681/Emergencies>
- Sign Up for Emergency Notifications from Code Red:
 - <https://public.coderedweb.com/cne/en-US/655AC5D55998>
- Jefferson County Emergency Preparedness Guide:
 - <https://www.jeffco.us/DocumentCenter/View/11923/Emergency-Preparedness-Guide?bidId=>