

PILE BURNING FAQ'S

Mother Nature Dictates Conditions | The Burn Prescription Must Be Met to Proceed | 60-80% is good!

The USFS and Wildland Firefighters will be busy watching the weather for ideal temperature and wind conditions once our snow depth is maintained.

SNOW DEPTH

6-24 inches is ideal.

Six inches creates a “fire ring” like rocks around a campfire.

Over 24 inches of snow will bury the piles and they won't burn effectively.

Some snow will melt over the course of the burn period; it is normal and expected.

TEMPERATURE

The best day is a cold day! Cold temperatures reduce residence time of heat in any airborne embers, creating a low potential for spread outside the project area.

WIND

A windy day is required to 'stoke' the fire, similar to what we do when we start a campfire - we blow on it!

Wind also dissipates smoke.

Wind speed and atmospheric instability (Haines index) help piles consume quickly and allow smoke to disperse effectively to reduce impact to communities.



Things to know...

- Fires may spread to ground cover between piles. This is considered a good thing to help forest health.
- Piles may not completely burn: A successful pile burning operation will consume 60-80% of the woody material in 80% of the piles.
- The Colorado Department of Health and Environment plays a major role. We may have perfect snow, temperature, and wind conditions, but if air quality conditions that day are poor, the CDPHE may deny a permit to burn that day.
- If piles are left unburned or the prescribed consumption parameters are not met, they will remain on the list for the next season.
- **Bottom line:** If weather conditions are not met OR the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division limits smoke, then our piles will not be burned.

Project Logistics

- The USFS team will burn piles within the USFS boundaries. And Summit Fire & EMS/Red White and Blue Firefighters will burn piles on private land in a coordinated operation
- Burn crews make a “Go/ No Go” decision 12-24h before a burn; which makes it difficult to give much advance notice to owners. Once there is 6 inches of snow on the ground, owners should consider burning a possibility and be ready on short notice.
- The burn operation starts mid-morning with a test fire. If the test fire is successful, ignitions will proceed; and usually conclude by mid-afternoon. Burn crews stay on scene until early evening. Piles may smolder into the night.
- It may take several days to get to all piles - which means that if weather changes OR air quality conditions are not acceptable, that some piles will be left for later.
- Some piles may be left intentionally for wildlife habitat



“We’ll only burn slash piles when there is sufficient moisture in the form of snow or rain and weather conditions allow for a safe, effective burn and optimal smoke dispersal.”

~Mathew Walls, White River National Forest East Zone fuels specialist

MAIN TAKEAWAYS:

- ONCE THERE IS 6 INCHES OF SNOW CONSISTENTLY ON THE GROUND, BE PREPARED FOR VERY VERY SHORT NOTICE THAT A BURN WILL OCCUR. IF YOU PLAN ON EVACUATING, THEN BE READY TO LEAVE ON SHORT NOTICE (“GO BAG”, Neighbor who can help, leave early!)
- Piles are ignited and are expected to mostly burn down within hours, leaving behind smoldering rings that eventually burn out
- DO NOT EVEN CONSIDER USING YOUR GARDEN HOSE TO PROTECT YOUR HOME. It is not proven to help and dangerously depletes our water if firefighters need it!
- Ruby Ranch is lucky! The Eagles Nest Wilderness Project is a showcase project for the USFS. They are taking this seriously and very top officials are signing off on the burn prescription. This is a well coordinated project between the USFS, Summit County Fire and EMS, and Breckenridge Red, White , and Blue Fire teams. They are all professionals, they are in charge of this project and we should not interfere.