

Jefferson Como Fire Protection District

Fire Mitigation:

What Works, What Doesn't



Practical tactics for homeowners at 9,000+ feet in the South Park basin

Indian Mountain · Como, Colorado

THE SETTING

Why Indian Mountain is different

We live in a wildland-urban interface at altitude. Our fuels, our wind patterns, and our water access make every mitigation decision matter more than it would in town.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When a fire starts here, embers will arrive at your house before the fire does.

9,000+ ft

Elevation — drier air, faster cure-out, lower humidity

Lodgepole & Ponderosa

Stand-replacing fire-adapted forests right outside our doors

Limited water

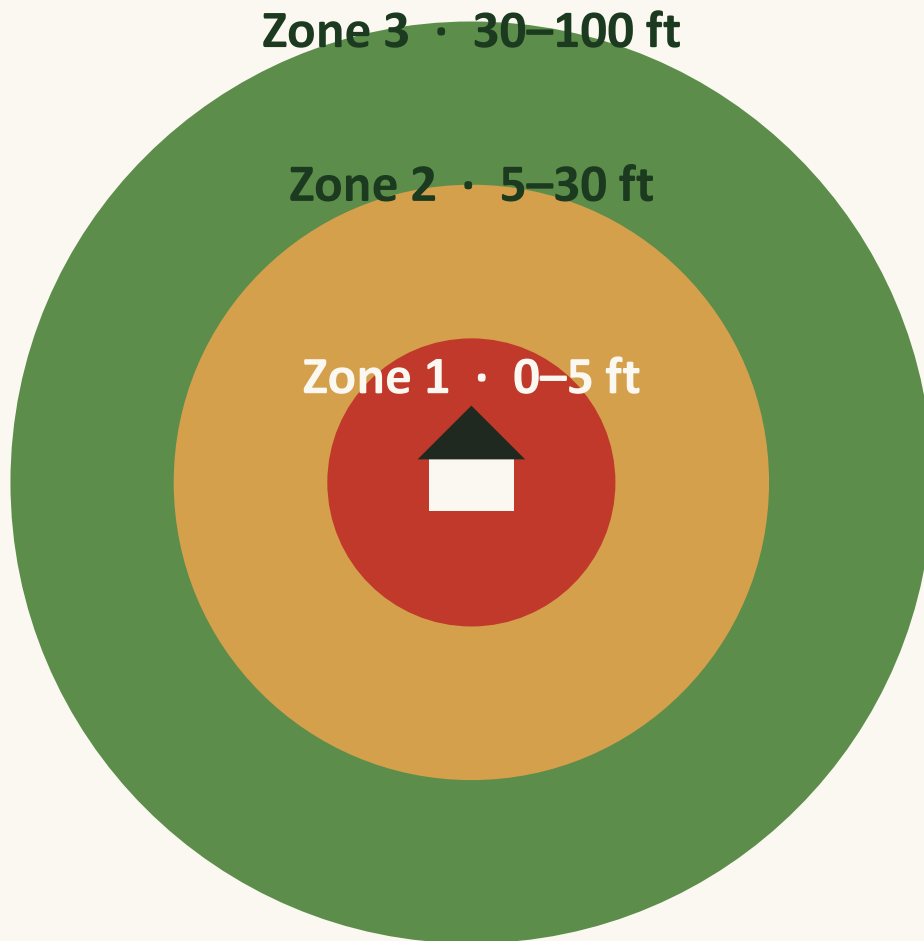
Few hydrants; tankers and cisterns drive response time

One way in, one way out

Most loops feed CR 15, Albino / Arrowhead and Stagesop— evacuation depends on minutes

THE FRAMEWORK

Defensible space: three concentric zones



● **ZONE 1 · Ember-resistant**

Nothing that can ignite. No mulch, no shrubs, no firewood, no plastic.
Single most important zone.

● **ZONE 2 · Lean, clean, green**

Spaced, fire resistant plants only. Pine needles raked. Tree limbs 10 ft off ground.
Slows fire and breaks ladder fuels.

● **ZONE 3 · Reduce fuels**

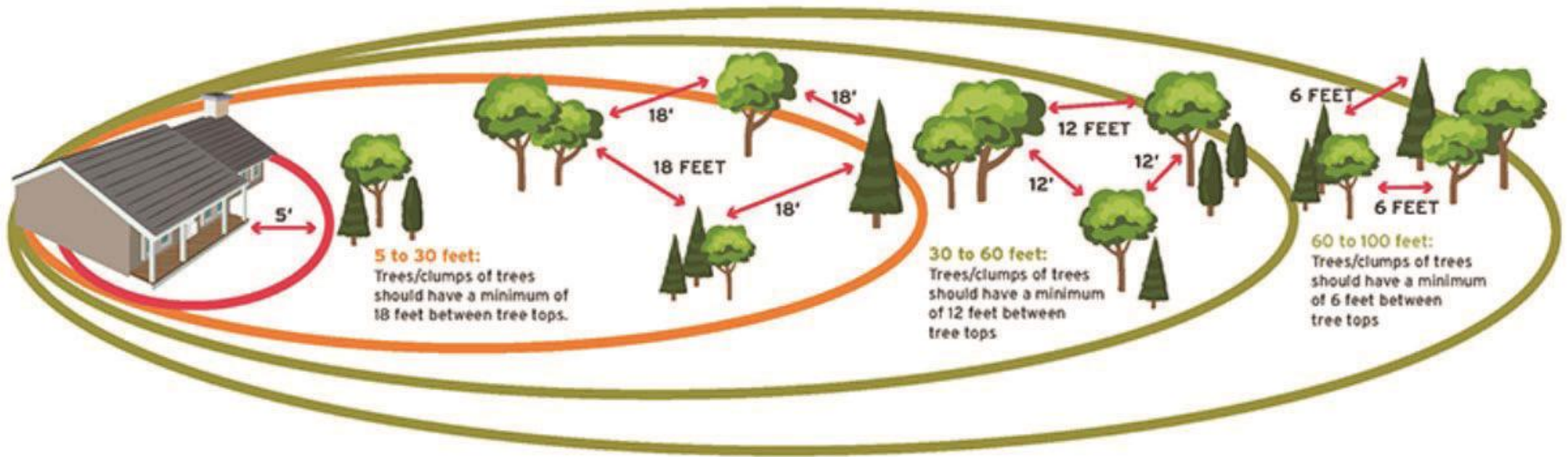
Thin trees so crowns don't touch. Remove dead-and-down. Mow grass to 4 inches.
Forces a crown fire back to the ground.

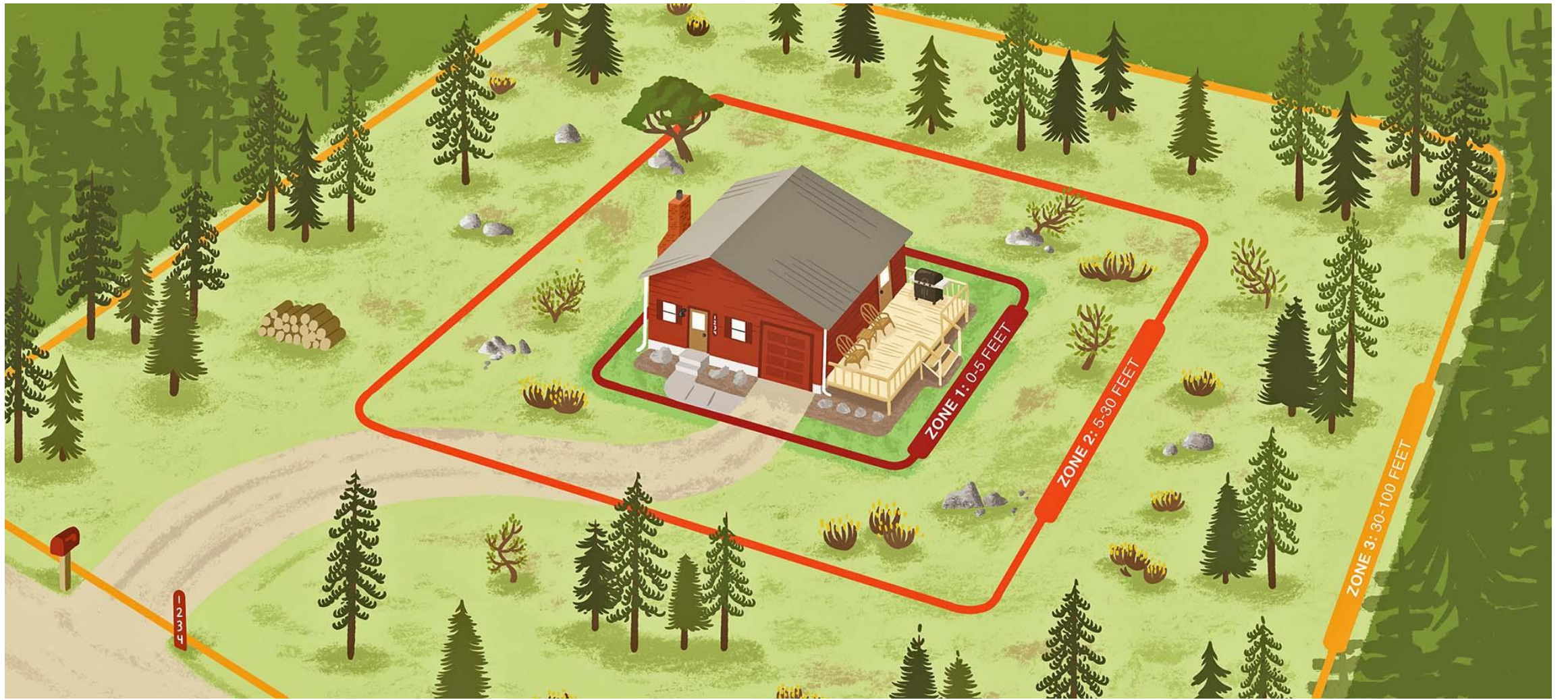


Embers

Wind

TREE SPACING

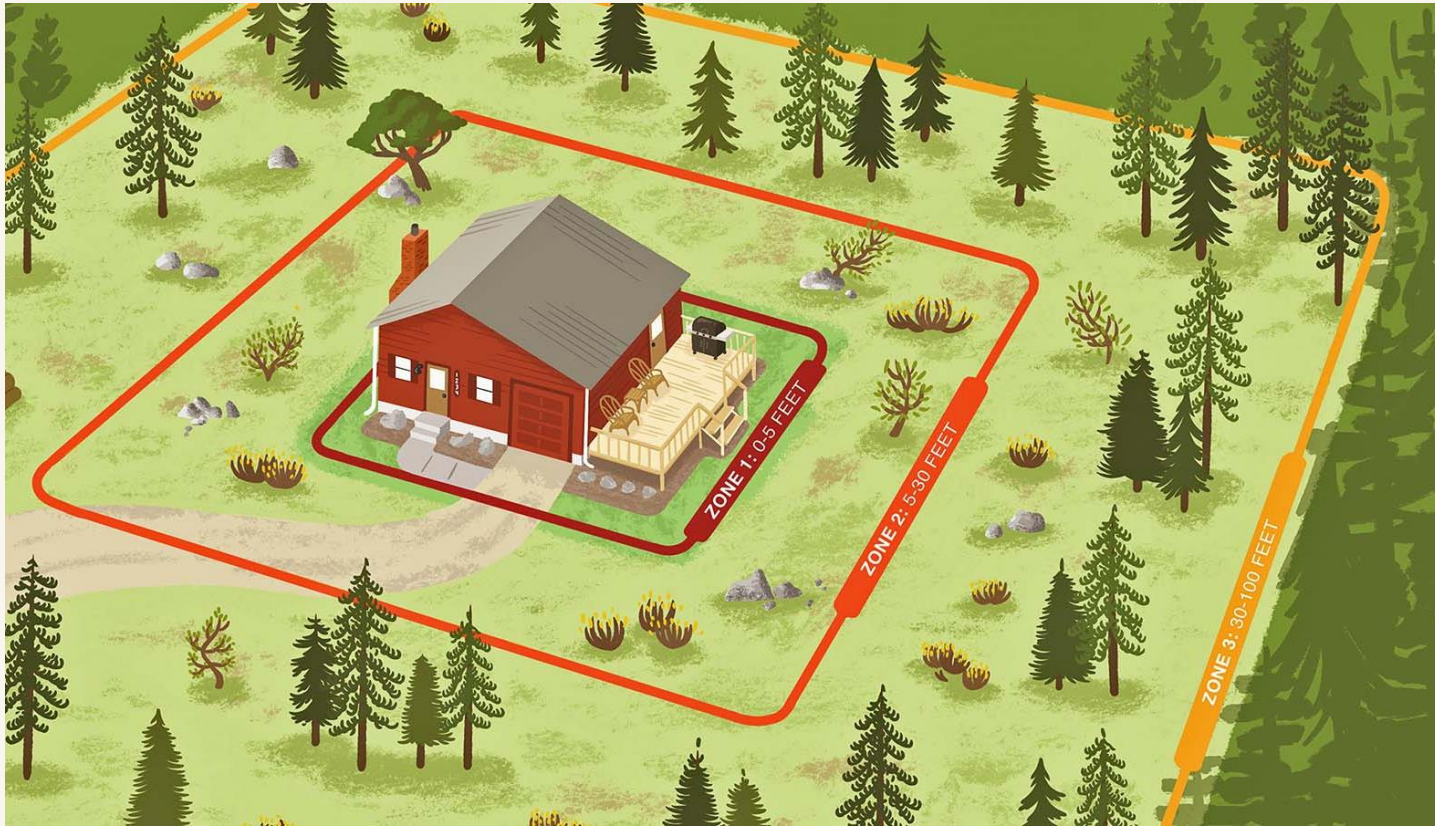




Firewise focuses on what we CAN change

Firewise USA® community action

Key idea: Homes ignite from embers, radiant heat or direct flame. Small, consistent actions around each home can have a large community impact.



Home Ignition Zone

Firewise guidance centers on the home and the area around it, generally from the structure out to 100 feet, with the highest priority closest to the home.

0–5 ft.
Immediate zone: keep it non-combustible.

5–30 ft.
Intermediate zone: reduce ladder fuels.

30–100+ ft.
Extended zone: thin, limb and remove dead fuels.

0 – 5 FT FROM YOUR HOME

Zone 1 — the first five feet

If embers land in this strip and find fuel, your house is the fuel next.

DO · GOOD PRACTICE

- ✓ Bare mineral soil, gravel, or pavers up against the foundation
- ✓ Move firewood stacks at least 30 ft from the home
- ✓ Sweep pine needles out of corners, off the deck, off the roof / gutters
- ✓ Replace bark mulch with crushed stone in this zone
- ✓ Trim shrubs away from siding and vents

DON'T · COMMON MISTAKE

- ✗ Junipers, sage, or arborvitae planted against the house
- ✗ Wood mulch or pine-needle landscaping along the foundation
- ✗ Firewood, propane tanks, or pallets stored on the deck
- ✗ Doormats made of plastic — they ignite from a single ember
- ✗ Plastic patio furniture and storage bins jammed against siding

5 – 30 FT FROM YOUR HOME

Zone 2 — lean, clean, and green

This is where you break the fuel ladder — keep ground fire out of the canopy.

DO · GOOD PRACTICE

- ✓ Limb up pines 6–10 ft from the ground (younger trees: 1/3 height)
- ✓ Space tree crowns at least 10 ft apart, edge to edge
- ✓ Mow native grass to 4 inches or less by mid-June
- ✓ Group plantings in small islands surrounded by rock or hardscape
- ✓ Keep a hose on a rack that reaches every side of the home

DON'T · COMMON MISTAKE

- ✗ Continuous pine duff and slash piles within 30 ft of the house
- ✗ Lower branches touching the ground — perfect ladder fuel
- ✗ Decorative bark beds that connect to wooden fences or sheds
- ✗ Tall, cured grass left standing into July and August
- ✗ Wooden fence sections attached directly to siding (a fuse to your home)

30 – 100 FT FROM YOUR HOME

Zone 3 — give the forest room to breathe

Goal: force a crown fire back to the ground before it reaches Zone 1.

DO · GOOD PRACTICE

- ✓ Thin lodgepole and ponderosa so crowns don't touch (Open canopy 10–20 ft spacing)
- ✓ Remove dead-and-down on a steady schedule — not one heroic weekend
- ✓ Chip slash on-site or haul to the slash program
-
- ✓ Coordinate with neighbors so fuel breaks line up across property lines

DON'T · COMMON MISTAKE

- ✗ Leaving cured slash piles all summer 'until we have time to burn'
- ✗ Dense stands of lodgepole right up to property lines
- ✗ Pruning everything to the ground (kills trees; creates erosion)
- ✗ Burning slash on a Red Flag day — or any windy day
- ✗ Assuming the green trees on your lot can't carry fire — they can

THE HOME IS THE FUEL

Hardening the house itself

The structure is the last line of defense — and the part embers will test first.

Roof

- ✓ Class A roofing (metal, asphalt, tile). Gutters cleaned and screened.
- ✗ Wood shake roof. Pine needles in gutters and roof valleys.

Vents

- ✓ 1/8 inch metal mesh on every soffit, foundation, and gable vent.
- ✗ Open vents or plastic louvers that melt and let embers inside.

Deck

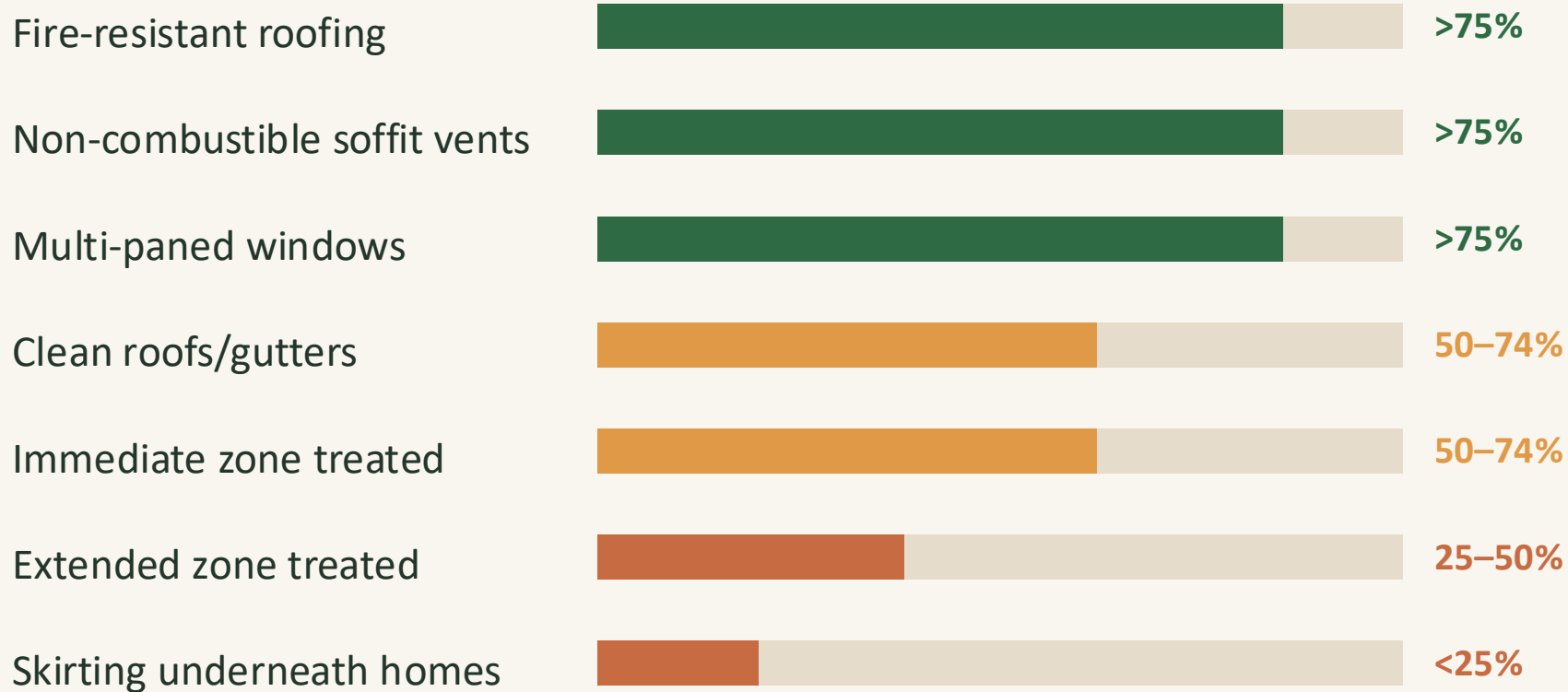
- ✓ Non-combustible deck or fire-rated boards. Nothing stored underneath. Keep clear of debris.
- ✗ Bare wood deck with kindling, plastic bins, and propane stored beneath.

Windows

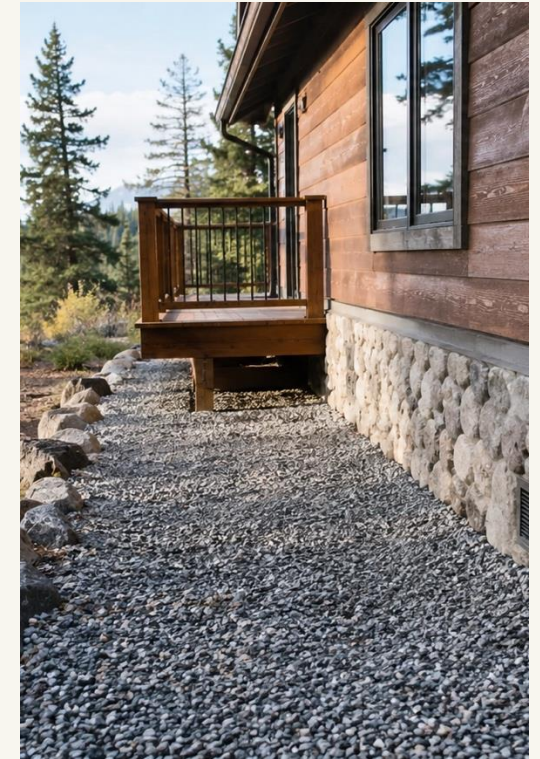
- ✓ Dual-pane, tempered exterior pane. Metal screens installed.
- ✗ Single-pane glass. Single-pane glass cracks from radiant heat alone.

What the 2026 assessment found

Indian Mountain has strengths to build on and a few practical priorities for the next three years.



Firewise USA® community action



Good news

Many homes already have ember-resistant structural features.

Priority gap

Extended-zone fuels and immediate-zone maintenance need more attention.

Local nuance

Some “gaps” reflect common alpine/subdivision designs, but education and targeted retrofits still help.

COMMUNITY-WIDE TACTICS

What we do together

Defense scales with coordination.

1 Evacuation routes

Drive CR 15, Albino / Arrowhead, and Stagesstop with your family. Pick a primary route AND a backup. Sign up for CodeRED / Park County alerts.

2 Shared fuel breaks

Coordinate Zone 3 thinning along common property lines so breaks actually connect.

3 Neighbor check-ins

Know which neighbors have horses, livestock, mobility needs, or are seasonal residents.

4 Slash program

Use the Park County / IMPOA slash chipping days — don't let piles sit through fire season.

5 Address visibility

Reflective 4-inch numbers on a non-combustible post at the driveway. Engines need to find you.

6 Go-bags

Pre-staged: meds, documents, pet carriers, photos, chargers. 15-minute notice is realistic.

A FIELD GUIDE

The biggest mistakes we see on the mountain

Every one of these is common up here, and every one has burned down a home somewhere in Colorado.



Junipers against siding

Resin-heavy, ladder-shaped, and right next to your wall. Replace with rock or low perennials.



Bark mulch in Zone 1

Smolders, then flames. Use crushed stone or bare earth in the first five feet.



Firewood on the deck

Stacked fuel attached to your house. Move 30+ ft away and uphill if possible.



Open foundation vents

Embers blow into the crawlspace and ignite from inside. Install 1/8" metal mesh.



Wooden fences touching the house

A 50-ft fuse pointed at your siding. Break the connection with a metal gate or stone.



Slash piles left through summer

Cured in June, explosive in August. Chip, haul, or burn in winter only.

Most home losses start small

Firewise USA® community action

Firewise actions interrupt the pathways that allow fire to reach a home.



The goal is not to “fireproof” Indian Mountain. The goal is to reduce ignition opportunities, improve access and give firefighters a safer, more defensible community to work with.

WHERE TO START THIS SEASON

Three things, this month.

You don't need a contractor or a permit to do any of these.

1

Clear Zone 1

Walk the first 5 ft around your house with a rake and a wheelbarrow. Remove every needle, every twig, every flammable item.

2

Screen your vents

Buy 1/8" metal mesh at the hardware store. Screen every soffit, gable, and foundation vent.

3

Plan your exit

Sit down with everyone in the house, pick a primary and a backup route off the mountain, and sign up for Park County CodeRED alerts.

FOR DISCUSSION TONIGHT

Which of these is hardest on your lot — and who can help you with it?

Priority 2: reduce ladder fuels from 5–30 feet

Firewise USA® community action

This zone helps keep fire on the ground and away from tree crowns.



- Prune low branches, generally 6–10 feet from the ground depending on tree height.
- Remove shrubs, small trees or dense vegetation that can carry flames upward.
- Create spacing between trees and shrubs where practical.
- Use chipping, the burn pit and neighbor help to manage slash.

Vertical Fuel Arrangement



Aerial Fuels

Ladder Fuels

Surface Fuels

Ground Fuels



In a forest where fires rarely happen, fuel builds up: There's **surface fuel** (grass, logs, woody debris, brush); **ladder fuel** (shrubs, small trees, snags); and **tree crowns**.

- 1** Surface fires spread quickly through brush and woody debris.
- 2** Ladder fuels allow the fire to move up toward the forest canopy.
- 3** Tree crown fires are so intense, they're difficult to control.



BEFORE



AFTER





THANK YOU!

Reducing wildfire risk together