

AFTER THE DISASTER GUIDEBOOK

A TOOLKIT FOR LANDOWNERS IMPACTED BY WILDFIRE



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Published July 2026

Colorado State University Extension is an equal opportunity provider. | Colorado State University does not discriminate on the basis of disability and is committed to providing reasonable accommodations. | CSU's Office of Engagement and Extension ensures meaningful access and equal opportunities to participate to individuals whose first language is not English.

Colorado State University Extension es un proveedor que ofrece igualdad de oportunidades. | Colorado State University no discrimina por motivos de discapacidad y se compromete a proporcionar adaptaciones razonables. | Office of Engagement and Extension de CSU garantiza acceso significativo e igualdad de oportunidades para participar a las personas quienes su primer idioma no es el inglés.

<https://col.st/tj1ws>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A NOTE FROM US	4
ACRONYMS	5
IMMEDIATE SAFETY	6
COMMUNICATION	7
MENTAL HEALTH & SELF CARE	9
RETURNING TO YOUR PROPERTY	12
INSURANCE, FINANCE, IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS	17
CLEANING & DEBRIS MANAGEMENT	22
CARING FOR ANIMALS AFTER WILDFIRE	26
LANDSCAPE RECOVERY	28
POST-FIRE FLOODING	31
STAY CONNECTED	33
GUIDEBOOK CONTRIBUTORS	34



Astragalus spp. reclaims the land within the Pine Gulch Fire burn scar.
Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

A NOTE FROM US

It's difficult to put into words the profoundly life-changing experience of surviving a wildfire. After the flames are out, the road to recovery is about more than filing claims, calls with agencies, clean-up, and what will feel like a never-ending to-do list. It's about the emotional healing of accepting what was lost, forgiving yourself for what you wish you would have done, and remember to have faith again in the future ahead. The smiles will eventually outweigh the tears—you'll emerge stronger and be amazed by your resilience.

No two recovery journeys are the same, and each present unique circumstances. CSU Extension has gathered a variety of resources based on insights from subject matter experts and survivors to provide guidance on the road to recovery. We hope you find this toolkit useful as you embark on the journey ahead.



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit would not have been possible without contributions from experts at Colorado State University Extension, Colorado State Forest Service, CSU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Warner College of Natural Resources, and Mesa County. We would like to extend a special thank you to landowners impacted by the Pine Gulch and Cameron Peak Fires for sharing their recovery journey. Thank you to all who contributed.

ACRONYMS

Listed below are some of the common acronyms and their meaning that are used throughout this guidebook and throughout post-fire recovery.

Acronym	Definition
BAER	Burned Area Emergency Response
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CDA	Colorado Department of Agriculture
CDPHE	Colorado Department of Health and Environment
CSFS	Colorado State Forest Service
CSU	Colorado State University
CSUE	Colorado State University Extension
DOI	Division of Insurance
DOLA	Division of Local Affairs
DOR	Department of Revenue
DORA	Department of Regulatory Agencies
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EWP	Emergency Watershed Protection
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FSA	Farm Service Agency
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
NAMI	National Alliance for Mental Illness
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWR	NOAA Weather Radio
NWS	National Weather Service
RMIIA	Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association
SRFSN	Southern Rockies Fire Science Network
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
WAVE	Watershed Assessment and Vulnerability Evaluation

IMMEDIATE SAFETY

LET OTHERS KNOW YOU'RE SAFE

Whether it's through phone or a designated meeting place, notify family or friends that you're safe.

CHECK IN AT GUNNISON COUNTY'S EVACUATION CENTER

Stopping at the evacuation center is another good way to let others know you're safe and could prevent firefighters from risking their lives looking for you and your family. It's also a way to connect with law enforcement, local and county administration, community organizations, and other survivors that may be there. It gives some survivors solace to know that there are people and resources ready to assist.

WAIT UNTIL AUTHORITIES SAY IT'S SAFE TO RETURN

Returning to the scene puts you and others in danger, as well as hindering firefighting efforts. The behavior of fires is always changing and if conditions change, no one may know if you're there. People can be evacuated more than once in the same fire event; repeated returns and evacuations present challenges for emergency responders.

KNOW WHEN TO CALL 911

If you feel that you are in immediate danger, call 911. For updates on the fire, contact Gunnison County's non-emergency dispatch line at **(970) 641-8201** or sign up for text or email emergency alerts from Gunnison County Sheriff's Office. During an active fire, the InciWeb Incident Information System will have details and fire maps that are regularly updated. This information is often more reliable than local news because it is managed by a fire communication specialist.

LIMIT WILDFIRE SMOKE EXPOSURE

Wildfire smoke harms healthy people, those with pre-existing health conditions, livestock, and pets. To reduce exposure to smoke, keep an eye on air quality reports from Gunnison County Public Health or EPA AirNow.

KEEP UP WITH CURRENT WEATHER CONDITIONS

The NWS Forecast Office in Grand Junction provides active alerts on weather in Gunnison Colorado. This office also operates transmitters for NOAA Weather Radios for the area by providing 24/7 information on watches, warnings, and advisories

IMMEDIATE SAFETY RESOURCES

- **Gunnison County Emergency Alert Sign-Up**
<https://gunnison.genasys.com/portal/en/>
- **InciWeb Incident Information System**
inciweb.nwcg.gov
- **EPA Air Now**
www.airnow.gov
- **National Weather Service**
www.weather.gov
- **NOAA Weather Radio Western Colorado**
<https://www.weather.gov/nwr/>

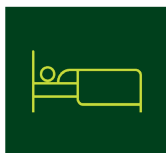
MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF CARE

Disasters typically bring about feelings such as fear, shock, disbelief, grief, anger, and feelings of guilt. Memory loss, anxiety, depression, and flashbacks are all common occurrences. Many people have trouble concentrating, thinking clearly, or sleeping. Linda Masterson, author of *Surviving Wildfire*, and 2011 Crystal Fire survivor shares tips from experts and her own experience on taking care of yourself and your family during disaster recovery.



It's okay to not be okay

Allow yourself to recognize your own feelings and be patient with the changes in your emotional state. This is a difficult time, and you don't have to put on an about-face. No one is perfectly fine after experiencing a wildfire.



Rest and sleep

Sleep deprivation can interfere with your ability to function and make decisions. Try to get as much rest and sleep as you can. Relaxation techniques such as meditation or deep breathing may help if you have ongoing difficulties with sleep. Also avoid working on your claim or watching the news right before bed.



Arrange professional counseling

The Red Cross, Colorado 211, or your primary care doctor can connect you and your family to professionals who specialize in disaster related stress. Most health insurance plans, or employee assistance programs can help cover mental health or psychiatric care.



Engage in healthy behaviors

Eating well and getting some exercise will help you feel better and make your brain work better. Staying hydrated is also important as dehydration can worsen symptoms you may already be experiencing. Also limit or avoid alcohol, drugs and marijuana as it can interfere with your sleep and ability to cope.



Stay connected

Social support is crucial to disaster recovery. Staying connected to your family, friends, neighbors, fellow survivors, and any other support network is helpful as you work through recovery.



Establish or reestablish routines

This can include eating meals at set times, sleeping and waking on a set schedule, or sticking to a workout routine. Include some positive routines, such as taking a walk or reading a good book, to give yourself something to look forward to during these trying times.



Monitor and limit media exposure

During disasters, the non-stop TV, radio, internet, and social media coverage can make things worse. Unfortunately, all of the news may not be completely accurate, which can add to your stress. As compelled as you may feel to follow all of it, try to stick to the daily official briefings.



Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF CARE RESOURCES

- **Coping with Disaster**
Ready.gov
www.ready.gov/coping-disaster
- **Coping with Natural Disasters**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/6t3OJ>
- **Helping Children Cope with Disaster**
FEMA
www.fema.gov/pdf/library/children.pdf
- **Recovering Emotionally from Disaster**
American Psychological Association
www.apa.org/topics/disasters-response/recovering
- **Crisis Services**
Mobile Crisis Services at Gunnison Valley Health
www.gunnisonvalleyhealth.org/our-services/behavioral-health/mobile-crisis-services/
- **Colorado Agricultural Addiction and Mental Health Program**
Counseling for farmers, ranchers and rural families
www.campforhealth.org/

LOCAL CONTACTS

- **Gunnison Valley Health Behavioral Health**
(970) 648-7128
www.gunnisonvalleyhealth.org/our-services/behavioral-health
- **Axis Health Systems**
(970) 252-3200
www.axishealthsystem.org/locations/gunnison
- **Gunnison County Sheriff's Office**
(970) 641-1113
gunnisoncounty.org/1119/Sheriffs-Office
- **Gunnison Country Food Pantry**
(970) 641-4156
gunnisoncountryfoodpantry.org
- **Gunnison Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program**
(970) 641-3244
www.gunnisoncounty.org/882/Public-Assistance
- **Colorado 211 Information & Referral Line**
211 or 1(866) 760-6489
www.211colorado.org

“

I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A ROCK, BUT INSIDE I WAS CRUMBLING.

When I reached out, I was seconds away from ending my life. Financially, things on our ranch were falling apart—and I felt like a failure. I didn't want my problems to burden anyone else, so I buried 'em inside. And that's what almost buried me. Thankfully, I picked up my phone and called Colorado Crisis Services. I was able to finally get out everything I'd been holding inside, and I realized that trying to be a rock of strength for everyone else had actually caused me to start crumbling inside.

No matter what you're going through, you don't have to go through it alone.



COLORADO
CRISIS SERVICES

844-493-TALK (8255)
OR TEXT TALK TO 38255

REACH OUT FOR FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, 24/7 SUPPORT



RETURNING TO YOUR PROPERTY

CSU Extension agents Drew Walters (left) and Susan Carter (right) replanting shrubs on Tom Brigham's property. Photo credit: Kamie Long, CSFS

*“Whatever the news, no matter how bad or good it may be, there can be no next steps until you know what you’re dealing with.” -Linda Masterson, *Surviving Wildfire**

Although the flames are out, there are still dangers that remain. Some hazards that may exist include structural damage, unstable roads, weakened trees, hot spots, or wildlife predators that have moved into the area. Flash floods may occur post-fire with limited precipitation. Survivors recommend making an initial trip to assess the extent of damage, post-fire hazards, and plan for restoration tasks that need to be accomplished first, before beginning clean-up or returning home.

Regardless of the extent of the fire damage to your home or land, returning after the fire will be an emotional experience. For the first viewing and initial assessment, you’ll want to make sure to bring a camera, notepad, and box of Kleenex. The first steps to recovery will start with assessing and documenting your losses. **Be sure to take plenty of pictures and notes before moving anything around.** If your adjustor is coming with you, take good notes of your conversation.

Also wait to bring back pets and livestock from their evacuation location until you know the extent of damage and hazards that may exist such as, downed fences, hot spots, or predators that may have moved into the area. The following pages include re-entry safety tips and a post-fire supply list.

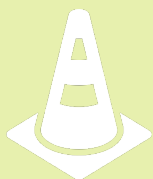
SAFETY TIPS FOR RETURNING

When you are given approval by a fire authority to return to your property, keep the following safety tips in mind as you re-enter.



KEEP AN EYE (OR EAR) ON THE WEATHER

When rain falls over a burned area upstream of your location after a wildfire, flash flooding can occur. Avoid burned areas, storm drains and natural drainages. Keep a NOAA weather radio handy for emergency updates, weather, and news reports.



USE CAUTION AND GOOD JUDGMENT

Smoke, sparks, ash pits, hot spots, or hidden embers should be avoided. Deeply charred or smoking trees, poles, and wires on the ground are dangerous. If another fire or emergency occurs while assessing damage, call 911.



DRIVING & WALKING THE PROPERTY

Watch for downed or unstable trees, brush, rocks, and utility poles. Roads may also have debris or damage. Take a walk around the property to find hotspots and downed fences to help keep pets and livestock safe.



ARRIVING AT YOUR HOME

Prior to returning, check in with your local fire authority to make sure it's safe to return. Be wary of structural instability and hot embers. Check gutters, roofs, overhangs, decks, and wood/debris piles for embers. Look for any hot embers in attics, crawl spaces, or vents.



CHECK FOR UTILITY DAMAGE

Before using any utilities, lines, meters, or propane tanks should be inspected by a professional for damage. Call your service provider to see if their technicians have already come to your property to inspect your utilities or see if an appointment needs to be scheduled.



ASSESSING YOUR WATER & SEPTIC SYSTEM

Before using a private well, it should be inspected for damage. Depending on the damage, a well technician may be needed. The fire may have contaminated water, so test it before drinking it. Water testing kits are available through [county health department].

RESTORATION TASKS AND NEXT STEPS

As you assess your property, use this worksheet to help develop a plan for restoration tasks that will need to be completed. Some tasks to consider may include but are not limited to, securing the site against further damage, estimating and repairing structural damage, and general cleaning. Depending on the level of damage, assistance of a building or utility professional may be required.

<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____



Pine Gulch Fire burn scar, Garfield County, CO.
Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

RETURNING TO YOUR PROPERTY RESOURCES

- **Addressing the Impacts of Wildfire on Water Resources**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/L9IS8>
- **Assessing Your Homesite After a Wildfire**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/sEWwN>
- **Emergency Water Supplies & Treatment**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/FJD3W>
- **Use of Wells and Septic Systems Following a Wildfire**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/VM8b1>
- **What to Do After a Wildfire: Returning Home & Recovering After a Wildfire**
American Red Cross
www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies

LOCAL CONTACTS

- **Gunnison County Electric Association**
(970) 641-3250
www.gcea.coop/
- **City of Gunnison Electric**
(970) 641-8020
www.gunnisonco.gov/departments/public_works/electric/index.php
- **Ferrell Gas**
(970) 243-2720
www.ferrellgas.com/
- **Crested Butte Water and Sewer**
(970) 349-5338
www.crestedbutte-co.gov
- **City of Gunnison Water and Sewer**
(970) 641-8020
www.gunnisonco.gov/departments/public_works/water_sewer/index.php
- **Atmos Energy**
(888) 442-1313
www.atmosenergy.com/
- **Amerigas**
(970) 641-1571
www.amerigas.com/
- **Xcel Energy**
(800) 895-4999
co.my.xcelenergy.com



INSURANCE, FINANCE, & IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Destructive wildfires can be financially stressful, and even, in some cases, devastating. Having good records organized and stored in a safe location (e.g., safe deposit boxes, digital backups) will make insurance claims, taxes, and filing for financial assistance go smoother down the road. The resources on the following pages can help you work with insurance, finance and funding options, and replace important documents. Here are a few more financial pointers to keep in mind.

- Before beginning any clean-up, restoration, or debris removal, contact your insurance representative to review your policy coverages, set up a timeline for meeting with your adjuster, and determining the best way to document losses. For help finding your insurer or agent, reach out to the Colorado Division of Insurance at **(303) 894-7490** or visit doi.colorado.gov.
- Take several photos from multiple angles or videos with narration to describe the damage and previous features of your home, personal property, and land. This will help with insurance claims and applications for assistance programs.
- Survivors recommend double checking your phone for old photos to help give you and the insurance company an idea of what possessions have been lost or damaged. For example, if you have a photo from a holiday gathering in your living room last year, you may be able to see items in the background that you can add to your home inventory.
- Keeping track of your receipts from restoration and recovery projects will be important as you work through your insurance claim or apply for assistance programs. Also, look through your email account for any pre-fire purchases to help with valuing items.
- Flood preparedness is a top priority following a wildfire; if possible, flood insurance should be purchased. Visit www.floodsmart.gov to learn more about flood insurance.

INSURANCE RESOURCES

As you assess losses and begin working with insurance, check out the resources below for templates, pro-tips, and more information.



Ag Damage Assessment and Economic Loss Estimation

United States Department of Agriculture

<https://senecacountycce.org/resources/ag-damage-assessment-form>



Colorado Step-by-Step Home Insurance Claim Guide

Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association (RMIIA)

http://www.rmiia.org/downloads/AfterTheFire_StepByStep.pdf



How to Create a Home Inventory

United Policyholders

bit.ly/createhomeinventory



Insurance Claim Tips for Partial Loss Fires

United Policyholders

bit.ly/partiallossfire



Insurance Tips for Coloradans Impacted by Wildfires

Colorado Division of Insurance

bit.ly/coloradansimpactedbywildfires



Sample Insurance Claim Letters and Documents

United Policyholders

bit.ly/lettersanddocs



Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- **Disaster Losses and Related Tax Rules**
Rural Tax Education
<https://col.st/jdZc>
- **Weather-Related Sales of Livestock**
Rural Tax Education
<https://col.st/gGIaf>
- **Properties Destroyed by Natural Disaster (Video)**
Colorado Division of Taxation
bit.ly/COTaxationRulesforProperties
- **Wildfire Relief**
American Red Cross
<https://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/disaster-relief/wildfire-relief.html>
- **Disaster Assistance Programs**
Farm Service Agency
bit.ly/FSADisasterAssistancePrograms
- **Emergency Watershed Protection Program Factsheet**
Natural Resources Conservation Service
bit.ly/NRCSEWPfactsheet
- **Grants & Funding Assistance**
Colorado State Forest Service
csfs.colostate.edu/funding-assistance/

LOCAL CONTACTS

- **Gunnison County Assessor**
(970) 641-1085
gunnisoncounty.org/132/Assessors-Office
- **Gunnison County Commissioners**
(970) 641-0248
[gunnisoncounty.org/127/ County-Commissioners](http://gunnisoncounty.org/127/County-Commissioners)
- **Gunnison County Clerk & Recorder**
(970) 641-1516
gunnisoncounty.org/143/ Clerk-Recorders-Office
- **Gunnison County Treasurer**
(970) 641-2331
gunnisoncounty.org/161/Treasurers-Office
- **Montrose Farm Service Agency (FSA)**
(970) 249-8407
www.fsa.usda.gov
- **Grand Junction IRS Office**
(970) 241-6265
www.irs.gov/help/contact-my-local-office-in-colorado

REPLACING IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

If you were unable to make it out of your house with important personal documents, check out the table below for more information on how to replace them.

Document Type	Contact Information
Colorado Driver’s License, Vehicle Registration, or Titles	Visit Colorado’s DMV online portal at mydmv.colorado.gov or call (303) 205-5600 .
Bank Checks, ATM, or Debit Cards	Contact your financial institution or the FDIC at (877) 275-3342 or www.fdic.gov .
Credit Cards	Contact the issuing institution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Express: (800) 528-4800 or www.americanexpress.com Discover: (800) 347-2683 or www.discover.com Mastercard: (800) 307-7309 or www.mastercard.us Visa: (800) 847-2911 or usa.visa.com
Social Security Cards	Visit www.ssa.gov or call (800) 772-1213
Birth or Death Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Colorado-issued birth or death certificates, contact CDPHE Vital Records by calling (303) 692-2200 or visiting cdphe.colorado.gov/vitalrecords. For out-of-state issued birth or death certificates, visit www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/index.htm For birth or death certificates issued abroad, visit travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/records-and-authentications.html
Marriage or Divorce Records	Copies of marriage and divorce records are available from the county that issued them. For Gunnison County records contact the county clerk at (970) 641-1516 or visit gunnisoncounty.org/143/Clerk-Recorders-Office .
Passports	Contact the U.S. State Department at (877) 487-2778 or visit travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/have-passport-lost-stolen.htm .
Income Tax Records	Find your local IRS office at www.irs.gov/help/contact-my-local-office-in-colorado or call the [City Name] IRS office at (970) 241-6265 .
Military Records	Contact the National Archives and Records Administration at (866) 272-6272 or visit www.archives.gov/contact .
For contact information on replacing other important personal documents, check out:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacing Important Documents in Colorado (Credit: University of Minnesota Extension and North Dakota State University Extension): https://col.st/ZTTFo Checklist of Important Legal Documents (FDIC): https://col.st/eapk8 Replace Your Vital Records (USA.gov): www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents 	



CLEANING & DEBRIS MANAGEMENT

After confirming your insurance coverage, scheduling a time to meet with your adjuster, and recording any damages or losses, you may be ready to start the clean-up process. Whether damaged or destroyed, you'll want to be familiar with safe clean-up, disposal, and debris management practices.

Your needs may vary depending on the extent of the damage and whether you hire contractors or do it yourself. The following pages include resources for the most common clean-up, disposal, and debris management issues that may arise.

Tom Brigham, Pine Gulch Fire survivor, sifts through rubble of his property. Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student



Debris left behind on Tom Brigham's property from the Pine Gulch Fire.
Photo credit: Kamie Long, CSFS

TIPS FOR SAFELY CLEANING FIRE ASH

- Keep children, pets, and livestock out of burn debris or ash sites.
- Well-fitting N-95 or P-100 masks can help protect during cleanup by blocking more ash particulate inhalation than dust or surgical masks.
- When cleaning ash, wear gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants to avoid skin contact. If you, a family member, or pet comes into contact with ash, wash it off as quickly as possible. Wash clean up clothing separate from other clothing.
- As much as possible, avoid stirring or shifting ash. Before lightly sweeping, mist indoor and outdoor hard surfaces with water to keep down dust. Follow up with wet mopping or a damp cloth.
- On lightly dusted indoor and outdoor surfaces a damp cloth or wet mop may be all that is needed.
- If available, utilize HEPA filter vacuums instead of shop vacuums or other non-HEPA vacuums. HEPA filter vacuums will filter out minute particles rather than blowing them into the air.
- Food, beverages, or medications that have been exposed to burn debris or ash should not be consumed. Factory sealed canned and packaged material can be washed and used if it has not been exposed to heat.
- If you have a vegetable garden or fruit trees, thoroughly wash the produce before eating.
- Clean all utensils and dishware before use by washing them in a strong detergent solution and then soaking them in a bleach solution of one teaspoon of bleach per quart of water for 15 minutes.

Resource adapted from Mesa County Sheriff's Office

Ash can be deposited on indoor and outdoor surfaces during and after wildfires and contains trace amounts of cancer-causing chemicals. The ash from trees and vegetation is typically non-toxic; ash from construction materials can be contaminated with mercury, asbestos, and lead, making it toxic. Ash can irritate skin, especially sensitive skin. Inhaled ash can induce nasal and throat irritation, as well as coughing. Asthma episodes can be triggered by airborne ash. As you begin the clean-up process, keep the following health and safety tips in mind.

CLEANING RESOURCES

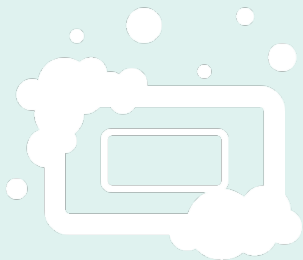
Check out the following resources for more information on safe and effective after wildfire clean-up in your home.



Cleaning Up After a Fire Disaster

Utah State University Extension

Visit <https://col.st/hA7zJ> for more information on cleaning smoke damage, fire retardant, soot, ash, both indoors and outdoors.



Cleaning Up and Removing Smoke Odor

American Red Cross

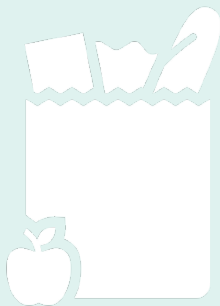
Check out bit.ly/cleaningsmokeodor for more detailed indoor clean-up advice and cleaning mixtures for removing smoke odor from clothes, walls, and surfaces.



Returning to Your Home Kitchen After Wildfire

CSU Extension

This resource has more information on supplies and considerations for cleaning refrigerators and freezers. Check it out at <https://col.st/1JCE6>



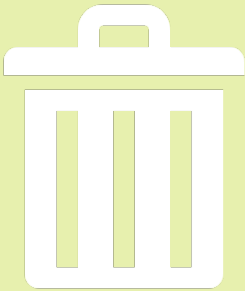
Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency

FoodSafety.gov

Visit <https://col.st/Heg6U> for more detailed information on preventing foodborne illness, food safety after power loss and food exposure to wildfire smoke.

DEBRIS AND DISPOSAL RESOURCES

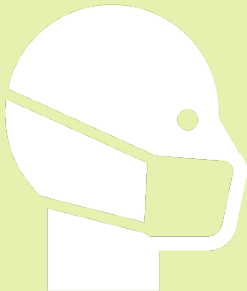
A good place to start is by checking in with your local landfill restrictions for disposing fire debris, hazardous materials, carcasses, and other waste. Gunnison County Landfill can be contacted by calling (970) 641-5522 or visiting www.gunnisoncounty.org/169/Solid-Waste-Management.



Debris Cleanup, Disaster Recovery Guide

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Visit www.bit.ly/CDPHEdebriscleanup for more information on safe cleanup of debris, ash, hazardous materials, and emergency livestock disposal.



Asbestos and Natural Disasters Guide

The Mesothelioma Center

Check out asbestos.com/asbestos/natural-disasters for information about materials containing asbestos and how to minimize your exposure after a wildfire.



Animal Carcass Disposal

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

This resource has more information on safe carcass disposal and staying in compliance with disposal regulations. Check it out at <https://col.st/lofC8>



Livestock Mortality Composting Guide

CSU Extension and Montana State University Extension

Visit <https://col.st/LaOGa> for more information on disposal for large and small operations in semi-arid western regions.

CARING FOR ANIMALS AFTER WILDFIRE

With many CSU Extension offices responsible for ESF-11, Emergency Support Function for animals, they can often find places for your animals until it is safe to return to your property or another permanent option. When you're ready to bring the livestock back, remember to handle them calmly and carefully. They will likely be stressed or confused and may react with unexpected behavior. Keep the following tips in mind:

- When it is safe to do so, check pens, barns, and sheds for damage, and check pastures for debris. Move animals to safe areas. Do not bring animals back until fencing and shelter is safe to do so.
- Check pets and livestock for injury and tend to minor injuries promptly. For animals with serious injuries or long-term behavioral issues, contact a veterinarian for help.
- Make sure your animals have plenty of fresh food and water. Cover their food, hay, and water to keep ash and other contaminants out. Do not feed hay that contains ash.
- Smoke can be harmful to animals. If you can see or feel the effects of smoke, take precautions to protect your pets and livestock from smoke exposure.
- Animals can become disoriented easily after a wildfire and get lost. Be sure that pets and livestock are wearing their identifiers (collars with IDs, microchips, tags, brands, etc.) with your name, address, and phone number.
- To look for lost and found pets, contact local animal shelters.
- For animals needing to be rescued or for help with carcass disposal, call your county's emergency management services or county extension office.
- Document and report all livestock and poultry losses immediately to your county Farm Service Agency (FSA).
- After wildfire, be sure your livestock are pastured somewhere safe from post-fire flooding, if possible.
- Walk pastures and remove debris to ensure animal safety.



Photo credit: Chelsea Bonser, CSU Student



Photo credit: Chelsea Bonser, CSU Student



Cash Brigham helps with replanting on his Dad, Tom's, property.
Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

ANIMAL CARE RESOURCES

- **Wildfire Smoke and Animals**
American Veterinary Medical Association
bit.ly/wildfiresmokeandanimals
- **Colorado Hay Directory**
Colorado Department of Agriculture
ag.colorado.gov/markets/hay-resources
- **Caring for Livestock After Disaster**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/YPTyY>
- **Assessing and Caring for Cattle After Wildfires**
Texas A&M Extension
<https://col.st/mgxNc>
- **Checklist of Considerations for Post-Fire Management**
Texas A&M Extension
[Post-Fire Management \(tamu.edu\)](https://post-fire-management.tamu.edu)
- **Fencing with Wildlife in Mind**
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
<https://col.st/VZjRv>
- **Livestock Industry Wildfire Injuries**
Colorado Department of Agriculture
<https://col.st/7NN3A>

LOCAL CONTACTS

- **CSU Extension Gunnison**
(970) 641-1260
extension.colostate.edu/gunnison/
- **Gunnison Valley Animal Welfare League**
(970) 641-1173
gvawl.org
- **Mountain Legacy Vet Center**
(970) 641-2215
mtnlegacyvet.com
- **West Elk Vet Services**
(970) 641-1555
www.westelkvet.com
- **Gunnison County Brand Inspector**
(720) 949-4802
ag.colorado.gov/brands
- **Montrose Farm Service Agency (FSA)**
(970) 249-8407
www.fsa.usda.gov



LANDSCAPE RECOVERY

Following a destructive wildfire, landowners will need to assess the surrounding landscape and determine how best to affect restorative treatments. Immediate concern should be for the stabilization of soils to help prevent or mitigate flooding, erosion, mudslides, and other hazards. Colorado's diverse topography, paired with burn severity of the area can make each landscape treatment plan vary.

The following pages contain landscape recovery resources for soil erosion, seeding, trees, and key contacts. Local CSU Extension staff and CSFS foresters can also help provide recommendations.

Woods' Rose and Gamble Oak regrows in the Pine Gulch Fire burn scar. Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

LANDSCAPE RECOVERY RESOURCES

SOIL EROSION

- **Understanding Burn Severity Photo Guide**
USDA and U.S. Forest Service
https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr243.pdf
- **Soil Erosion Control After Wildfire**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/vsFWG>
- **What Are Hydrophobic Soils?**
University of Idaho Extension
<https://col.st/EcQel>
- **Erosion Control Techniques & Supplies**
NRCS
bit.ly/erosiontechniques

SEEDING

- **Gunnison Grass Seed Mixes**
- *Gunnison Conservation District*
www.gunnisonconservationdistrict.info/seeds
- **Grass Seed Mixes to Reduce Wildfire Hazard**
CSFS
<https://col.st/GBIRr>
- **Native Grasses for Colorado Landscapes**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/0cjh1>
- **Seeding After Wildfire**
NRCS
[After the Fire - Seeding | Natural Resources Conservation Service](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/after-the-fire-seeding-natural-resources-conservation-service)
- **Replanting in Burn Areas Tips for Success**
CSFS
<https://col.st/y9Q3b>
- **Sources of Grass Seed, Sod and Plugs**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/s7kkq>
- **Sources of Colorado Native Plants**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/OBERc>



Globe Mallow regrows in Pine Gulch Fire burn scar.
Photo credit: Kamie Long, CSFS



Indian Paintbrush emerges after the Pine Gulch Fire.
Photo credit: Kamie Long, CSFS



Garfield County Extension Agent, Drew Walters, helps with replanting after Pine Gulch Fire. Photo credit: Kamie Long, CSFS

LANDSCAPE RECOVERY RESOURCES CONTINUED

TREES AND VEGETATION

- **Seedling Trees**
CSFS
[Seedling Tree Nursery | Colorado State Forest Service | Colorado State University \(colostate.edu\)](https://colostate.edu/seedling-tree-nursery)
- **Wildfire Severity Photo Guide for Assessing Trees**
Montana State University Extension
<https://col.st/VdlqU>
- **Native Trees for Colorado Landscapes**
CSU Extension
<https://col.st/5T6Kf>
- **Post-Fire Conditions in Various Fuel Models in the Southern Rockies Region**
SRFSN | Colorado Forest Restoration Institute
<https://col.st/QvLx6>
- **Post-Fire Restoration & Rehabilitation**
CSFS
csfs.colostate.edu/forest-management/restoration-rehabilitation

LOCAL CONTACTS

- **CSU Extension Gunnison County**
(970) 641-1260
extension.colostate.edu/gunnison/
- **CSFS Gunnison Office**
(970) 641-685
csfs.colostate.edu/gunnison/
- **NRCS Gunnison Office**
(970) 964-3588
nrcs.usda.gov
- **BLM Gunnison Office**
(970) 642-4940
www.blm.gov/office/gunnison-field-office
- **USFS Gunnison Ranger District**
(970) 641-0471
fs.usda.gov
- **Gunnison Conservation District**
(970) 596-7317
www.gunnisonconservationdistrict.info



Rain in the Pine Gulch fire burn scar causes post-fire flooding.
Photo credit: Malli Larson, Garfield County, CO

POST-FIRE FLOODING

Wildfires have increased the risk of flooding in many areas of Colorado in recent years. The dramatic changes in landscape and ground conditions after wildfires increases the risk of flooding during heavy rains. Burned landscape is unable to absorb rain as effectively as it did before the fire, resulting in runoff conditions like those found in parking lots.

Flooding is most common during the summer and early fall, when thunderstorms develop during the monsoon season. Rainfall over the burned area collects in streams causing flash floods carrying downed trees, boulders, gravel, and other debris. The resources on the following pages will help landowners downstream understand how to reduce risk and prepare for flooding.



Post-fire flooding in the Pine Gulch Fire burn scar.
Photo credit: Malli Larson, Landowner, Garfield County, CO



Post-fire flooding causes debris flow in the Cameron Peak Fire burn scar. Photo credit: Woody Petty, Forest Ranger Larimer County, CO

POST-FIRE FLOODING RESOURCES

- **Post-Wildfire Hazards: Mudslides and Debris Flow**
Colorado Geological Survey
bit.ly/postwildfirehazards
- **Flood After Fire Infographic**
FEMA
<https://col.st/eLpgn>
- **Colorado Flood Threat Bulletin and Map**
Colorado Water Conservation Board
www.coloradofloodthreat.com
- **Actions to Take Before a Flood Occurs**
After Wildfire New Mexico
<https://col.st/65LP3>
- **Find a Flood Insurance Provider in Colorado**
FEMA | National Flood Insurance Program
www.floodsmart.gov/flood-insurance-provider

LOCAL CONTACTS

- **Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District**
(970) 641-6065
ugrwcd.org/
- **Gunnison Geographic Information Services**
(970) 641-7645
gunnisoncounty.org/148/Geographic-Information-Services
- **Gunnison County Public Works**
(970) 641-0044
gunnisoncounty.org/157/Public-Works

STAY CONNECTED

Every loss and the emotions that come with it matter. It's okay to grieve life prior to the wildfire, mourn what has been lost, feel overwhelmed by the work ahead, and the multitude of other feelings you may experience. Like the wildflowers, you too will grow again in new ways, you may not have thought possible.

Throughout the development of this guidebook, one theme held constant. Amidst the heartbreak, we found ourselves captivated by the resilience of survivors and their land. Although it may feel like all is lost, your connections with family, friends, and the community, will prove to be the most valuable asset to your recovery.

Whether you've known CSU Extension and our partners for awhile or we've just connected, we hope to stay in touch along the way. Don't hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance or you're interested in getting involved in community recovery efforts.

You've got this.



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
GUNNISON COUNTY EXTENSION

CSU Extension Gunnison County
(970) 641-1260
extension.colostate.edu/gunnison/



Colorado State Forest Service
Gunnison County Office
(970) 641-6852
csfs.colostate.edu/gunnison



Gunnison County
(970) 641-7600
www.gunnisoncounty.org



Sego lily emerges in the Pine Gulch Fire burn scar.
Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student

GUIDEBOOK CONTRIBUTORS

First Version (2021)

The contributors listed below brought a wide range of perspectives including landowners that experienced post-fire impacts, extension staff that have assisted with recovery efforts, and subject-matter experts on emergency management, forestry, fire science, animal care, and communication. We hope you find this toolkit useful, and we welcome any feedback you may have so that we can continue to improve it. Thank you to these initial contributors from across the state of Colorado and relevant agencies.

- Channing Bice, Public Communication & Technology PhD Student, Department of Journalism & Media Communication, CSU
- Susan Carter, Horticulture and Natural Resources Agent CSU Extension: Tri-River Area
- Todd Hagenbuch, County Director and Agriculture Agent, CSU Extension: Routt County
- Doug Dean, Area Director and Livestock & Range Agent, CSU Extension: Tri-River Area
- Carolina Manriquez, Northwest Area Forester, Colorado State Forest Service
- Ragan Adams, Veterinary Extension Specialist, Department of Clinical Sciences, CSU
- Gloria Edwards, Southern Rockies Fire Science Network Program Coordinator, Warner College of Natural Resources, CSU
- Todd Hollenbeck, Deputy County Manager, Mesa County Colorado
- Tom Brigham, Landowner and Pine Gulch Fire Survivor, Garfield County, Colorado
- Malli Larson, Landowner and Pine Gulch Fire Survivor, Garfield County, Colorado
- Justin Wilson, Landowner and Cameron Peak Fire Survivor, Larimer County, Colorado
- Ellis Thompson-Ellis, Community Outreach Specialist, Grand Junction Fire Department
- Kamie Long, District Forester, Colorado State Forest Service
- Olivia Clark, past Extension Director and Agent, CSU Extension: Grand County
- Karen Crumbaker, Retired Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, CSU Extension: Larimer County

Roles listed are at the time of initial guidebook development and may no longer be current.



Left to right: Susan Carter, Tom Brigham, Doug Dean, Channing Bice, Drew Walters, and Kamie Long work on replanting in Pine Gulch Fire burn scar. Photo credit: Kamie Long, CSFS



Tom Brigham (left) and Doug Dean (right) replant shrubs near a creek on Tom's property after the Pine Gulch Fire. Photo credit: Channing Bice, CSU Student