



Forest Slash Burning Guidelines

These guidelines are to be used by forest landowners, land managers, and fire department personnel in Four Mile Fire District in planning and conducting safe and effective forest slash burning in woodland situations. It cannot guarantee safety from accidents, unforeseen circumstances, changing burning conditions, or negligent actions of the individual(s) burning slash. By following the intent of these guidelines and common sense, the landowner or forest manager can reduce forest slash accumulations, improve the appearance of their forest land, and reduce wildfire risk on their properties.

Definitions

Slash

The accumulation of limbs, tops, and miscellaneous residue left by forest management activities, such as thinning, pruning, and timber harvesting.

Piling and burning

The treatment of slash by piling the limbs and tops into manageable piles. Piles are burned during safe burning conditions, generally during the winter following cutting.

Mop-up

The final check of the burned slash to identify and extinguish still burning coals or materials. Extinguishment is usually accomplished by covering and mixing snow, water, or soil with the burning fuels.

Construction Of Piles

Pile slash immediately after cutting (while still green), and before winter snowfall. Remove all wood products such as firewood prior to piling. Pile branches and tops with the butt ends towards the outside of the pile, and overlapping so as to form a series of dense layers piled upon each other. Use a mixture of sizes and fuels throughout the pile. This prevents snow from filtering into the pile and extinguishing the fire while it is starting. Piles should be approximately 8 feet across in diameter and 6 feet in height, again to prevent drifting snow from entering the pile. Piles should be kept

compact, with no long extensions, to reduce snow filtration and improve ignition. Do not place large stumps and sections of logs in the piles, as they will burn for extended periods and will frequently need to be mopped-up.

Do not include garbage or debris in the pile. Locate piles in meadows, rock outcrops, or openings in forest stands. Do not pile slash over stumps where possible, as these areas will also need to be mopped-up. Piles may be situated within forest stands, if they are at least 5 feet away from adjacent tree trunks and tree crowns do not hang over the piles.

Planning Your Burning Effort

Landowners must complete the following steps before burning slash:

1. Obtain and complete a general open burning permit from the Boulder County Department of Health and Environment. The Health Dept. will review application and approve/disapprove permit and forward to the fire authority where the property is located for their approval. You can apply for a permit online at <http://www.bouldercounty.org/health/envIRON/airquality/outdoorair/openburning/index.htm>
2. On the day of the burn, the landowner must notify the Four Mile Fire Protection Agency at **303-444-0882**. The Boulder County Sheriff's Department, at **(303) 441-4444**, must also be notified with the planned burn time and an exact legal description of the burn location. Neighbors should be informed prior to burning as well.
3. Make sure the weather will be appropriate. Burning must be done during suitable weather conditions. Your burn permit instructions give requirements about altitudes and red/blue days. In general, periods of snow or light rain, with light winds for smoke dispersal (less than 10 mph) and a minimum of 3 inches of snow cover are ideal. Do not burn during periods of high winds, low humidity (relative humidity less than 30%) or drying conditions, temperature inversions, lack of snow cover or when these conditions are expected to develop after starting. Control of burning slash must be maintained at all times to reduce wildfire hazard and damage to residual trees. If snow cover becomes sparse during the burning period, additional water sources must be provided for

wildfire control and mopping-up efforts. Minimum equipment for persons conducting the burning: leather gloves, shovels and mattocks, leather work boots, work clothing, masks or bandannas for covering the mouth and nose, and proper eye protection.

Burning Slash Piles

Piles may be ignited by several means. If the needles and fine fuels within the pile have dried out throughout the summer, then ignition can be easily started with a large ball of newspaper placed within the bottom of the pile. If fuels are still partially green, or the pile is wet from rain or melting snow, then a hotter and longer burning source may be necessary. Sawdust, saturated with diesel fuel and placed within the bottom of the pile, can be used. Flares used for highway emergencies can also be utilized to ignite the piles. **Do not use gasoline for this purpose!**

One pile should be burned first as a test pile to see how it burns and at what rate prior to igniting other piles. If suitable burning conditions exist, then additional piles may be started. Ignite only those piles that can be watched with the available manpower until the piles have burned down. Depending on weather conditions, pile size, and moisture content of the fuels, piles should burn down in 20 to 35 minutes. As a general rule, 3 to 6 piles per person is a manageable rate if piles are closely situated.

After the piles have burned down, re-pile any unburned slash and large wood chunks (called "chunking-in") into the beds of coals before starting any new groups of piles. Do not start any new piles after 2:00 p.m. Piles started after this time may continue to burn into the evening. All fires must be cold out prior to 5pm.

Finally, check the piles every day for the next three days to make sure no hidden smoke or fire remains.