



USDA Forest Service
Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests

PILEBURNING

Why does the Forest Service build piles?

Slash piles are a result of hazardous fuels treatments. Even when larger material can be removed, limbs and smaller diameter material is often left behind by contractors or Forest Service crews, either because it is unusable or too costly to remove.

Why burn the piles rather than leave them, chip them or haul them away?

While some amount of scattered and piled slash is beneficial for soils and wildlife, too much slash on the ground causes fuel loading, creating undesirable conditions for firefighting. Chipping or hauling are costly and often not feasible. In some cases, chipping puts too much material on the ground, preventing regeneration. Burning is the most cost-efficient way of removing piles from the landscape.

When will the Forest Service burn piles?

Slash piles on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests are burned under specific “prescribed” conditions, including ample precipitation or snow and a favorable weather forecast. These conditions are typically met in fall or early winter and continue until early spring. In some areas, especially west of the Continental Divide, too much snow can bury piles and hinder the ability of crews to burn them. In these areas, the window of opportunity for pile burning may be limited to late fall and early winter.

Why are there so many unburned piles?

In addition to the “prescribed” conditions required for pile burning, the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division regulates smoke through its own permit process. Smoke permit requirements limit the number of piles that can be burned in a day based on conditions such as the proximity to occupied homes and the smoke dispersion forecast. The Forest Service and State work together to balance air quality and public health considerations with achievement of wildland fire risk reduction. Tens of thousands of piles are created every year in fuels reduction projects along the wildland-urban interface across the Forest, we work to burn as many each day as prescription and smoke permit conditions allow.

How can I learn about prescribed burning plans or be notified when burning will occur?

Each district maintains a separate list for prescribed burning notifications. Anyone who asks can be added to these email lists and will be notified of days and areas where pile burning is expected to occur. Our website also offers helpful information about pile burning.



U.S. Forest Service prescribed burns are conducted by trained wildland firefighters.

Get Notified

To sign up for email updates regarding prescribed burns on National Forest System lands in your area, send a message to one of the following addresses:

- For National Forest in Grand County (near Grand Lake, Granby, Tabernash, Fraser and Winter Park), please email: SRDupdates.fs.fed.us
- For National Forest in Boulder, Gilpin, Jefferson and Clear Creek counties (near Rollinsville, Nederland, Ward, Jamestown, Boulder, Georgetown, Empire, Idaho Springs, Evergreen and Blackhawk), please email: BRDvis@fs.fed.us
- For National Forest in Larimer County (near Loveland, the Estes Valley, the Big Thompson area, Red Feather Lakes, Glen Haven and Fort Collins), please email: rcloudman@fs.fed.us



Visit our prescribed burning webpages for more information.

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/arp/rxfire

