

LYONS

# Residents hear about how to keep homes safe from wildfire

## Some evacuated from Stone Canyon conflagration in July

BY NICOLE DORFMAN

DAILY CAMERA

Residents gathered to hear about wildfire mitigation at a meeting on Thursday; many of whom had front row seats to the Stone Canyon fire in July, a fire which grew to more than 1,300 acres and forced evacuations in the northern half of Lyons.

Climate change is increasing fire risk across the board, said Jim Webster, wildfire mitigation manager for Boulder County.

"Climate change and climate action is a big priority for our commissioners," said Webster. "Wildfires are going to be a lot more intense, severe and frequent in the future."

Webster mentioned several past and recent fires, including the Marshall fire, which started on Dec. 30, 2021, and caused more than \$2 billion in damage in Louisville and Superior; the Four Mile Canyon fire, which started Sept. 6, 2010, and burned a 5-mile area west of Boulder; the Stone Canyon fire; and recent fires in Los Angeles.

"I think the people in this room get it ...," said Webster. "but when you have a fire like Stone Canyon, that's when people start paying attention."

Webster said that fire mitigation often starts at a community level.

"We've got to mitigate against embers, and we're going to come back to that theme tonight in terms of how we harden homes so embers don't destroy them," said Webster. "Screen your vents. Remember those embers? ... If your vents aren't screened, those embers are going to enter and ignite your home."

Additionally, Webster said it's crucial for residents to mitigate the first 5 feet next to their homes against wildfires.

"For that first 5 feet, we don't want combustible material, because we don't want embers to accumulate and combust," said Webster. "Remove junipers and stuff that's stacked against the shed."

Wood mulch and juniper flowers are especially combustible, according to Webster.

"We're going to junk our junipers," said Webster. "People know that we call them green gas cans. Those junipers are the first things that ignite and jump onto other structures."

Webster said that the reason junipers are highly flammable is that they have a high resin content.

Lyons resident Kelly Sproul said that she remembered watching from her kitchen window as the Stone Canyon fire burned.



"I had the pleasure of welcoming two firefighters onto our property, assigned from our insurance agent after the Stone Canyon fire, which I saw break out from my kitchen window," said Sproul. "Upon touring our property ... the firefighters pointed out that it's a blessing that the fire didn't reach a higher density housing development."

Boulder County Commissioner Ashley Stolzmann said that wind has been a driving force in several of the fires in question.

"From my perspective, one thing that we all face in this area that's a real challenge is wind, and so whether you're in a low-density area or a high-density area, if the wind is blowing 120 miles per hour, people need to evacuate," Stolzmann said.

Seth McKinney, fire manager for the Boulder County Sheriff's Office, talked specifically about the windy conditions that caused the Marshall fire. \*

"The common denominator on very large destructive fires, not just here in Boulder County but across the U.S., is wind-driven fires. It's changed the game tremendously for us on the response side," McKinney said.

Patrick Wroblewski, a Lyons resident, mentioned the community group Lyons Citizens for Responsible Development has been discussing impacts that planned new building might have in connection with wildfires.

"After we had the Stone Canyon fire and in the wake of the Palisades fire, we were just gobsmacked that we wouldn't put to bed the idea of expanding (housing) into extreme wildfire risk areas and adding fuel that would directly go right into town," said Wroblewski.

Boulder County Commissioner Marta Loachamin and Stolzmann hosted the town hall. Boulder County Sheriff Curtis Johnson also attended.