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**PIKES PEAK WILDFIRE PREVENTION PARTNERS RELEASE COMPELLING NEW BLACK FOREST FIRE MITIGATION REPORT AND VIDEO**

Why did some homes in the Black Forest Fire survive while others burned, and what determined home survival? Even now after the embers are cold, residents, government officials and firefighters are asking why. The Pikes Peak Wildfire Prevention Partners (PPWPP), a local wildfire mitigation and educational partnership, released its report that addresses the question of why mitigation is a critical part of the answer. The PPWPP Report, *Black Forest Fire Assessment Team Report to the Governor of Colorado*, was released on January 22, 2014.

The Governor's office was looking for an objective assessment of how successful defensible spaces were in preventing home losses during the fire. The report is the culmination of over 1,000 hours of analysis and writing by Partner members. It is dedicated to the 34 wildland firefighters who died in the line of duty in 2013. Colorado also marked the 20th anniversary of the South Canyon Fire on Storm King Mountain in which fourteen firefighters died. It is hoped the dangers they and their fellow firefighters faced will not be in vain. It is hoped those who live in forested areas will recognize their role in firefighter safety and effectiveness, so everyone goes home.

Randy Johnson, PPWPP President, and a firefighter who fought the fire on the chaotic first day, says, "Too often firefighters find themselves facing unnecessary risks due to unmitigated properties. We actually interviewed firefighters to learn how mitigation affected their decisions on which homes they could defend with a greater measure of safety and effectiveness. Firefighters can defend homes, but the homeowner must take responsibility for creating a safer firefighting environment by reducing hazardous fuels. Firefighters do not have time to thin forest fuels and prepare structures for the homeowner as a fire is bearing down on them."

Keith Worley, principle author of the report, adds that, "Mitigation works best when neighbors work together." He cites the Cathedral Pines subdivision as an example of successful community wide preparation. "The entire Cathedral Pines subdivision was mitigated," he says. "Even though the fire burned through the community on the first day, only one home was lost. That underscores how a community should work together to protect their communities, properties, forests and the safety of firefighters."

Andy Lyon, of Wullhouse Studio, LLC, produced a companion video to the Governor's report. It features interviews with firefighters who fought the fire, and follows their decision making process about the defensibility of homes in the fire's path. The video can be viewed on the Partner's website at [www.ppwpp.org](http://www.ppwpp.org). DVDs will be available soon.

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