

Work now to save lives and property from wildfires

By Lisa Hatfield

Wescott Fire Protection District Fire Marshal Margo Humes and Tri-Lakes Monument Fire Protection District Fire Marshal John Vincent presented wildfire safety information to homeowners at two meetings organized by the Tri-Lakes Women's Club, one on May 11 at Lewis-Palmer High School and the other on May 14 at Palmer Lake Town Hall. Humes and Vincent used examples from the Waldo Canyon Fire, described fire behavior, and explained how homeowners can make their homes more fire-proof and get to safety during a wildfire.

On the "blowout Tuesday" of the Waldo Canyon wildfire last summer, "The fire blew at 65 miles an hour down the mountain," Vincent said. "There was 300- to 400-foot flame height in Cascade because of the number of trees that were burning." In addition to the fire's flames,

blizzards of burning embers blew through the air and started spot fires on houses and vegetation at least a mile away from the fire front.

Vincent and Humes explained that although people cannot control topography or weather, they can control the amount of fuel available to burn on their property. During a wildfire, firefighters only have a few seconds to decide if they "can defend this house, or is it a goner?" Vincent said. "I am not going to die to protect your home," he said. "We need you doing things (ahead of time) to defend your house too, and that's creating defensible space." They provided these guidelines:

- Firefighters need to be able to see the house from the street without vegetation blocking the way.
- The roof is the greatest threat to the home. During a wildfire, if a home has a cedar shake roof, "We will not



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