

A Step-By-Step Guide To Building And Burning Slash Piles For Colorado Landowners

1. CHOOSE A LOCATION

Identify an area appropriate for building and burning slash piles on your property. Pile burning is appropriate in Zone 3 of the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). Refer to the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) [HIZ Guide](#) for more information.

2. MARK THE TREES

Make a plan for what trees to cut. Refer to the CSFS HIZ Guide for guidance on developing a forest management plan for your property. If you need additional help, reach out to your local CSFS office or watershed coalition.

3. LEARN ABOUT MATERIALS

Before cutting trees and building piles, familiarize yourself with your county's restrictions on what type and size of material can and cannot be burned in a slash pile. In Larimer County, woody material up to 6" in diameter can be burned. Tree trunks and branches larger than 6" diameter cannot be burned in a slash pile; consider using these larger sections for firewood! Find additional Larimer County requirements [HERE](#).

4. BUILD

Build your slash piles. Refer to The Ember Alliance's [Pile Building Tips](#) and the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control's [Pile Construction Guide](#). Well-constructed piles will be much easier and safer to burn, so make sure you are building good piles! Learn more about pile building here: <https://emberalliance.org/cpba/>

5. CURE

Allow 6-12 months for your piles to cure, or dry, before you burn them. If you build your piles in the spring, they will likely be ready to burn that same winter. If you build your piles in late summer or fall, you will likely need to wait for the following winter for them to be ready to burn.

6. TRAIN

In Colorado, private landowners are not required to have any specific qualifications to conduct pile burning on their lands. However, it is always prudent to seek training opportunities when it comes to prescribed fire. Sign up for the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) [Certified Burner Program](#) to become a Certified Burner B and receive liability protection for pile burning. Contact Kristin Leger at The Ember Alliance to host a Pile Burn Workshop and receive hands-on pile burning experience while connecting with fellow burners - kristin@emberalliance.org

7. WRITE A PLAN

Regardless of how many piles you plan to burn, it is recommended that you write a burn plan. By enrolling in DFPC's Certified Burner Program you will receive training on burn plan writing.

8. APPLY FOR A COUNTY PERMIT

If you plan to burn **50 piles or less** in a calendar year, you need to apply for an "open burn permit." Each county has different restrictions for pile burning. Visit the website below and click on your county to familiarize yourself with your local restrictions.

<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/apens-and-air-permits/open-burn-small-pile/slash-permits>

9. OR APPLY FOR A STATE PERMIT

If you plan to burn **more than 50 piles** in a calendar year, you need to apply for a "smoke management permit" from the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE). Learn more here: <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/apens-and-air-permits/smoke-management-permits-for-larger-projects>

10. NOTIFY

Contact your neighbors to let them know they may be seeing smoke in the air so they don't call it in as a wildfire. Refer to your burn permit for additional notification requirements. Some fire departments may have the resources to assist landowners in their district with pile burning. Contact your local fire department if you need assistance with burning your piles and/or mopping up (i.e., putting the piles out).

11. BURN!

Burn your piles! Make sure weather conditions are appropriate for pile burning (in Larimer County, there must be at least 3" of snow on the ground and eye-level winds under 10 mph) and complete a [Go/ No-Go Checklist](#) before igniting your piles. Refer to your burn permit for day-of requirements for your burn, such as calling your local fire department prior to ignition and upon final extinguishment.

