

COLORADO

Wildfires captured in real time

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Photographs can portray what it's like to be face to face with a fire. Many times people affected by fire do not realize how wildfires behave and what firemen on the ground have to do to combat them. So the goal of wildfire photographer Kari Greer is to give people an up-close look at wildfires by photographing them on the front lines.

Greer presented her photography and spoke about the importance of capturing images of wildfires during the West Region Wildfire Council meeting in Montrose on Oct. 20. She also gave a presentation at the Sherbino Theater in Ridgway the same night.

Greer said many times the only part of a wildfire the public sees is a plume of smoke. Inside the fire, conditions change rapidly and many times fighting them is a genuine battle.

"You can't really know what's going on from a distance," Greer said. "Photography puts eyes on the fire in real-time."

In her presentation Greer showed several examples of firefighters combatting fires around homes. The most susceptible homes to wildfires are those located in the "wildland urban interface" where forest meets residential areas.

Some of the homes Greer photographed were saved, but some were not. The photos show firefighters taking steps to move flammable objects away from

homes and cover them in protective sheeting.

Many resources go into fighting fires. Greer said photography is one way of keeping the public informed about what is being done to save their property.

"You're accountable for your methods when you're spending taxpayer money, and photos can help educate the public on the realities of the situation," she said.

The goal of the West Region Wildfire Council is to open lines of communication between fire districts, residents and agency representatives on the Western Slope. WRWC educates homeowners on wildfire risk and helps fire districts get to know one another so they can be better prepared if a fire does affect the area.

WRWC offers free programs to help homeowners reduce their risk of losing a home to fire. Staff will conduct a free site visit to a property to help a homeowner understand fire hazards around a home and learn ways to make a home less vulnerable to ignition during a fire. The community chipping program provides a free chipping service to help eliminate woodpiles that could catch fire.

Members of WRWC have also met with the Ouray County Planning Commission to update the fire rating system on new homes constructed in the county.

The WRWC meets monthly on the second Thursday of the month. To attend a meeting or get more information on the programs offered by WRWC, go to www.cowildfire.org.

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