

## The 2010 Fourmile Fire

On September 6, 2010, several dangerous factors converged: very dry fuels from drought conditions and 7% Humidity, erratic mountain winds with gusts up to 40+mph, and a private property debris fire thought to be extinguished. Sometime around 10:00 a.m., an errant spark from that fire ignited the Fourmile Canyon Fire in the Rocky Mountain Front Range approximately six miles west of Boulder, CO.

The fire spread rapidly in several directions, destroying 142 homes on the first day. The winds fanned the flames and also kept firefighting aircraft grounded in the first critical hours. The steep, rugged, and complex terrain hampered on-ground firefighters efforts. First responders concentrated on evacuating residents of the 474 homes in the vicinity. When residents' phone and Internet communications were lost, some residents put their own safety in jeopardy going door-to-door trying to warn neighbors.

For several days, mountain residents in the surrounding area and towns, especially historic Gold Hill, kept a nervous eye on the shifting winds. When the fire was finally brought under control, it became one of the most damaging fires in Colorado's history with 6,388 acres burned, 168 homes lost (162 lost within the first 12 hours), a firefighting cost of \$10 million, and over \$200 million in property loss. But thanks to preparedness and wildfire-fighting skills and experience, there was no loss of life.



(Photo: United States Department of Agriculture / Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-289 August 2012)



Crown fire, fueled by abundant, dry surface fuels.  
(Photo: Mike Tombolato)

Some of the over 1,000 firefighters who fought the fire.



A slurry bomber drops fire retardant along one of the many ridges involved. (Photo: Patrick Kelley)



Fire charges down toward the town Gold Hill in the foothills outside Boulder. Most of the town was saved.  
(Photo: Greg Cortopassi for The Boulder Daily Camera)



One of the destroyed homes.  
(Photo: Boulder County Sherriff's Office)

"It came as a rushing wall of flame, devouring homes and torching cars. It departed as a singed memory, its gray smoke lingering over a blackened moonscape of ash and scorched dreams.

The Fourmile Fire took over the foothills west of Boulder in early September, testing hundreds of fire crews and multiple bomber pilots for days as they tried to tame the conflagration and save what homes they could."--Boulder Daily Camera

"The Gold Hill guys got sent to fight the fire in Emerson Gulch, and they wouldn't let them back up to Gold Hill. They put us on their trucks. . . . When we fled, I thought, 'Oh, this is sad. I hope Gold Hill doesn't burn.'

All of a sudden the wind died. They sent us back up. We lined 20 trucks long [down the main street of Gold Hill]- starting right here with truck 5404, the Gold Hill truck, and up the way we had High Country, we had Lefthand, we had Jamestown. Everyone was doing everything they could, and we formed a wet line right here."  
--Andrew Martinek, Indian Peaks Fire fighter who defended the town of Gold Hill

For more info:

[https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs\\_gtr289.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr289.pdf)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iMU5BsoCRY>

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