

Belief in climate change not linked to wildfire mitigation actions

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A view of a wildfire burning in the Four Mile Canyon area west of Boulder, Colo. Credit: Glenn J. Asakawa / University of Colorado Boulder

People who believe that climate change is increasing the risk of devastating wildfires in Colorado are no more likely to take mitigation

actions to protect their property, a new study led by researchers at the University of Colorado Boulder and the U.S. Forest Service has found.

The study, which was recently published in the journal *Environmental Hazards*, examined the role that climate change beliefs play in a homeowner's choice to undertake risk mitigation activities such as installing a fire-resistant roof to reduce the ignitability of their home or thinning surrounding vegetation that could act as a potential fuel source.

Respondents in the study were placed on a continuum from 'believer' to 'skeptic' based on their attitudes about the degree to which climate change affects wildfire risk in Colorado. Although over half of the study respondents agreed that climate change has increased [wildfire risk](#) in the state, those respondents were not necessarily more likely to take action on their private property to mitigate potential damage from future blazes.

The researchers did, however, find a correlation between climate change denial and risk mitigation actions.

"A small but distinct portion of respondents who reject [climate science](#) as a 'hoax' are also the ones who reported doing significantly more risk mitigation activities than other respondents," said Hannah Brenkert-Smith, a research associate in the Institute of Behavioral Sciences at CU-Boulder and lead author of the study.

The findings suggest that attitudes and actions related to climate change and risk mitigation are more nuanced than they are often portrayed in the media, and that focusing on locally relevant hazards may be a more useful tool for educating and galvanizing residents in fire-prone areas of Colorado.

"The conventional wisdom that a belief about climate change is a pre-

requisite for mitigating local [climate change](#) impacts was not found in this analysis," said study co-author Patricia Champ of the U.S. Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station. "This was a bit of a surprise."

Provided by University of Colorado at Boulder

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