



Firewise Communities/USA[®] FACT Sheet



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FIREWISE COMMUNITIES/USA[®] RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Overview

During extreme wildfires, firefighters do not have the resources to defend every home that is threatened. Communities whose residents take proactive steps to reduce their vulnerability have a greater probability of withstanding a wildfire. In addition, prepared communities enable the fire service to concentrate resources on the wildfire itself instead of individual structures.

Firewise Communities/USA is a nationwide initiative designed to encourage and acknowledge community action that minimizes home loss to wildfire. This program is of special interest to small communities and neighborhood associations that are willing to mitigate against wildfire by adopting and implementing programs tailored to their needs.

Community Definition

The recommended size for a participating Firewise Communities/USA site approximates that of a homeowners association. The size of a Firewise Communities/USA site is not governed by an arbitrary, fixed rule but rather by the limit of its effectiveness. Individual homeowner commitment is the cornerstone of a successful Firewise Communities/USA program. Residents of a smaller geographic unit can more easily create and execute a plan that reflects the needs of its specific locale. The program is intended to engage residents in playing an active role in shaping and implementing the community plan.

Criteria

Working with local wildland fire staff, communities can earn Firewise Communities/USA status by meeting the following criteria. Status is renewable annually.

- Enlist a wildland/urban interface (WUI) specialist to complete a community assessment and work together to create a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community. Development of a local WUI plan may take up to six months.
- Organize a multi-disciplined Firewise board/committee. The team should include homeowners and fire professionals. Participation by planners, land managers, urban foresters, and/or members of other interest groups is also encouraged.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA Day each spring that is dedicated to a local Firewise project.
- Invest a minimum of \$2.00 per capita annually in local Firewise projects. The investment may be met through financial donations, state grants, or an equivalent amount of volunteer labor. Work by municipal employees or volunteers using municipal and other equipment can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose. A specialist can work with the community to identify and seek project implementation funds, should they be necessary.
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA that documents continuing compliance with the program

Application

Becoming a Firewise Communities/USA recognition site begins with the community itself. A community representative completes an online request form on the Firewise Communities/USA Web site or contacts his/her state forestry agency. Applications and renewal forms are available at www.firewise.org/usa.

Firewise Communities Program

Firewise Communities/USA is designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The National Firewise Communities Program includes Firewise Communities workshops, Firewise Communities/USA recognition program, and support for fire organizations and community groups. Firewise is a program of the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.

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