



Becoming a Recognized Firewise Community/USA®

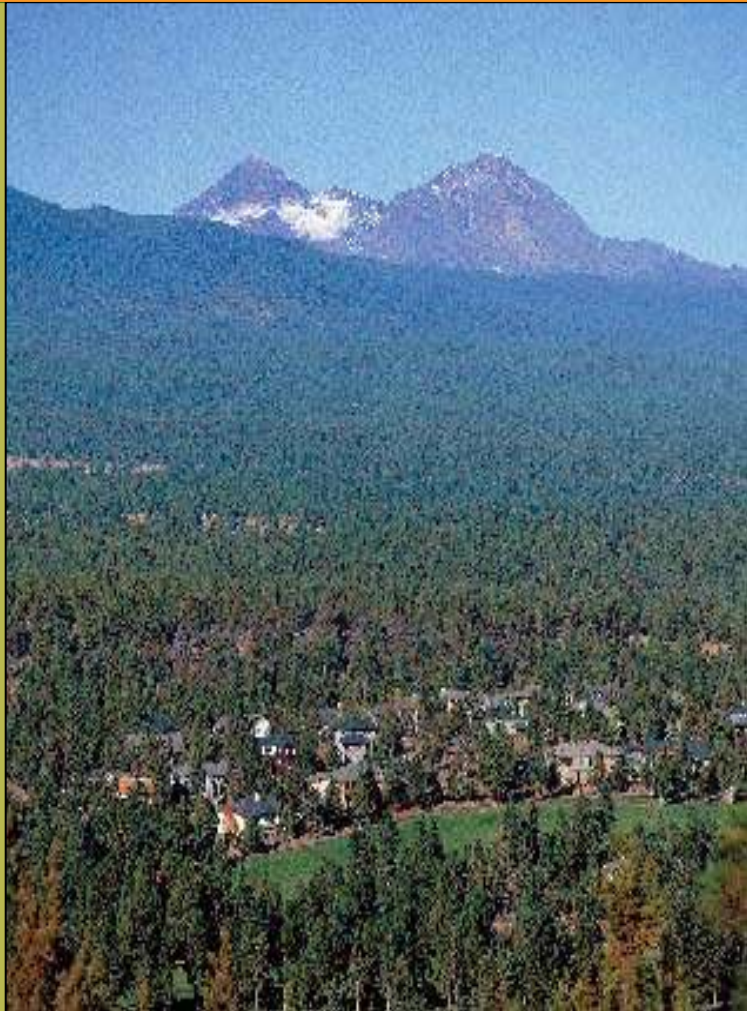
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Living with Wildfire

Whether you've lived in the wildland/urban interface for years, or are purchasing or renting your dream home away from the hectic pace of city life, you may be concerned about wildfire. Living where wildfires can occur poses a risk to your property and loved ones — but it is possible to live compatibly with this natural event. Read on to learn more about how your participation in the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program can make you and your home safer.



What is Firewise Communities/USA® ?

Citizen involvement is the cornerstone of the Firewise Communities/USA® Recognition Program. If you are a homeowner or community resident whose home is located in a region susceptible to wildfires, this brochure will offer you relevant information on how you can help your community to become Firewise. As participants in the Program, you and your neighbors will learn how to decrease the risk of losing your homes and to best protect yourselves in the event of wildfire.

Within wildland/urban interface areas, firefighters lack the resources to defend every home that is threatened during ex-

treme wildfires. However, communities whose residents take steps to reduce their vulnerability have a greater chance of surviving a wildfire. Firewise Communities/USA offers residents in fire-prone areas a unique opportunity to implement Firewise practices specially tailored to individual and community needs. You and your neighbors will gain useful knowledge and skills to prepare for a wildfire before it occurs, while also helping you maintain an acceptable level of fire readiness. Firewise homes and communities allow fire fighters to concentrate on fighting the wildfire – which ultimately saves more homes and lives. What's more, even a few preventive

actions can prove critical, because when adequately prepared, homes have often survived a wildfire *without* the intervention of the fire department.

The Program draws on a community's spirit, its resolve, and its willingness to

take responsibility for reducing wildfire risks by providing the resources needed to achieve both a high level of protection against wildland/urban interface fire and ecosystem balance. The Program utilizes the following three-legged template:

- *Wildland fire staff from federal, state or local agencies provide a community with information about living with wildfire with mitigation information tailored to your specific community or region.*
- *With the assistance of wildland fire staff, you and your neighbors assess wildfire risks around you and devise a cooperative network of other homeowners, agencies, and organizations.*
- *You and your neighbors identify and implement local solutions.*



How Can My Community Become A Recognized Firewise Community?

Ultimately, it all begins with you. Becoming Firewise takes time and coordination with your neighbors and others, but getting started is actually quite straightforward. The Firewise Communities/USA standards offer flexibility in creating the most appropriate plan and actions for your community. You will find that the effort expended reaps many rewards.

Following these steps, your community will be on its way toward becoming Firewise.

1) *Contact Firewise* — A community representative (you or another interested member of your community) completes an on-line request for contact by a Firewise representative on the Firewise Communities/USA web site, www.firewise.org/usa.

2) *Site Visit* — At an agreed-upon time, your state's Firewise Communities/USA liaison, a specialist in wildland/urban interface (WUI) fire, will visit your area and assess the proposed site. The visit is coordinated with local fire officials.

3) *Community Representatives* — At the same time, your community “spark plug” (again, this could be you) recruits community representatives to create a multi-disciplined Firewise board or committee. This group should include homeowners and fire professionals but may also include planners, land managers, urban foresters and members of other interest groups. Be aware that the development of the Firewise Community plan may take up to six months.

4) *Assessment & Evaluation* — Upon completing a site assessment and evaluation of the community’s wildfire readiness, the WUI specialist schedules a meeting with your local Firewise board to present the assessment for review and acceptance by the board. If accepted, the process continues; if not, it is terminated.

5) *Moving Forward/Creating A Plan* — Your local Firewise board develops area-specific solutions to its WUI fire issues based on the WUI specialist’s report. All members of the Firewise board must concur with the final plan. The recommendations are presented to and approved by the WUI specialist. The specialist may work with your community to seek project implementation funds, if needed.

6) *Implement Solutions* — Local solutions are implemented following a schedule designed by your Firewise group, who will be responsible for maintaining the program into the future.

7) *Apply for Recognition* — Firewise Communities/USA recognition status is achieved after your community submits its application form along with a completed Firewise community plan and Firewise event documentation to your state’s Firewise liaison. *The application form is available online and more information on Firewise Recognition Criteria is on Page 5.*

8) *Renewing Your Recognition Status* — Annual renewal of your recognition is completed by submitting documentation of your community’s continued participation to the state Firewise liaison. *This can be easily accomplished with the on-line form.*






www.firewise.org/usa



What are the Recognition Criteria?

Neighborhoods, subdivisions, and small towns in fire-prone areas of the United States can earn Firewise Communities/USA Recognition status by creating dedicated local Firewise task forces and by implementing Firewise principles tailored to their specific community needs. This nationwide initiative recognizes communities for taking action to protect people and properties from the risk of fire in the wildland/urban interface. Communities create their programs themselves with cooperative assistance from local fire staff and state forestry agencies.

Fire-prone communities earn Firewise Communities/USA recognition status by meeting the following criteria:

-  Enlisting a wildland/urban interface specialist to complete an assessment and create a plan that identifies locally agreed-upon solutions that the community can implement.
-  Sponsoring a local Firewise task force, committee, commission or department which maintains the Firewise Community program and tracks its progress or status.
-  Observing a Firewise Communities/USA Day each year that is dedicated to a local Firewise project.
-  Investing a minimum of \$2.00 annually per capita in local Firewise Communities/USA efforts. (Work by municipal employees or volunteers using municipal and other equipment can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose.)
-  Submitting an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA, documenting continuing compliance with the program.



What is the Home Ignition Zone and Why is it so Important?

The Home Ignition Zone is the key to preparing your home for wildfire readiness. Your home ignition zone – including the condition of the house and its immediate surroundings within 100 to 200 feet and other structures such as garages, decks, porches, or fences that come in contact with the house – is what determines your home's susceptibility to ignition during a wildfire. "The more you can eliminate the things that can lead a wildfire to your home, the more likely your home will survive," notes Judith Leraas Cook, project manager of the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program. She offers some simple steps for evaluating your home ignition zone and making it a deterrent to the progress of the fire:

- Clear the build up of pine needles and leaves from the base of the house and any connecting structures which could otherwise ignite the home's siding.
- Create a three-foot, fire-free area on all sides of your home.
- Clear gutters of leaves and debris.
- Trim any limbs on trees hanging over the house.
- "Limb up" trees around the house by removing lower limbs that are 10 to 15 feet from the ground.
- Use metal flashing at all connection points of structures, such as wooden fences attached to the house.
- Clear trees and shrubs of dead material and keep them pruned. Space trees and shrubs far enough apart to slow the spread of an approaching wildfire.
- Regularly care for your property to keep it free of all dead leaves and needles.
- Choose deciduous trees, rather than evergreens, when planting close to your home. Sap from evergreens is good fuel for fire. Deciduous plants burn more slowly.



- Install glass skylights. Plastic melts during a fire.
- Store firewood well away from your house, particularly during fire-season.
- Remove excess vegetation along roads and remove chipped wood immediately after cutting.
- Use non-flammable (Class A) roofing materials.
- Plant native wildflowers and fire-resistant plants; keep lawns green and irrigated as they serve as good fire breaks, as do rock gardens and xeriscapes.
- Remember that wide driveways, non-flammable walkways and other pathways can slow or stop the spread of a wildfire.



The national Firewise Communities program is an interagency program 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 Firewise Communities program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Emergency Management Association, the US Fire Administration, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, the National Fire Protection Association, and state forestry organizations. For more information, visit www.firewise.org.

What are the Benefits of Being a Firewise Community?

While the benefits can vary, there are a number of positive outcomes experienced by communities that become members of the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program. Being “Firewise”:

- Creates defensible space that prevents fires from advancing and endangering homes and lives.
- Improves property value while reducing risk of loss.
- Improves community relationships with local fire staff, since firefighters can concentrate their efforts on fighting wildfires rather than devoting often limited resources to protecting homes – which may ultimately be lost if the fire can’t be contained.
- Encourages good neighbors, since the more homes within a community that adopt “Firewise” practices, the greater the impact on reducing the heat and speed of the fire.
- Offers peace of mind, knowing that your home is prepared to survive a wildfire in the event one should occur.



Where Can I Get More Information about Firewise Communities/USA?



For more information on the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program, visit **www.firewise.org/usa** or contact your state forestry agency.