



Firewise Communities®



"The How-To Newsletter"

This quarterly provides articles and helpful hints on how to incorporate Firewise principles.

Fall 2009



THE FIREWISE COMMUNITY

Making Choices & Learning About Options

Since its inception, the *How-To Newsletter* has discussed the principles of Firewise that are critical to protecting your homes and communities in the event of wildfire. Recent issues have addressed evacuation and the importance of both communication and having a plan in advance. Ultimately, the more we can learn about the myriad of options available when dealing with an approaching wildfire, the better equipped we will be to make well-informed choices that can save homes, property, and most importantly, lives.

Recent fire events in Australia have highlighted an approach not widely known or employed here in the States, called Prepare/Go Early/or Stay & Defend (PGESD). Though contrary viewpoints often arise when this approach is discussed, its merits are worthy of discussion and of implementation. PGESD is widely used throughout Australia and many European nations. Where evacuation is concerned, the premise is to go early – very early, well before the fire in question can put those evacuating at risk. The larger focus is on education, from understanding fire behavior and the physical and psychological impact of being "in" a fire when it passes by, as well as the actions you must take and the equipment you should have in the event that you choose to stay and defend your home. PGESD also focuses on reinforcing the actions individuals must take to appropriately prepare their property in advance of a wildfire. That advance preparation is critical for those individuals who choose to stay and defend.

For decades, the U.S. has adopted an approach of fire suppression that includes controlled evacuations overseen by law enforcement officers. Often, the communication concerning evacuation can come at a time when it's no longer safe to go, as the deaths during the 2003 wildfires in southern California help to demonstrate.

The growing number of homes within the wildland/urban interface, coupled with the limited resources available to wildland firefighters, suggest that we need to explore new solutions that will make the process safer for all involved when a wildfire threatens lives and property. While PGESD places greater responsibility with homeowners, it also offers broader choices. By learning more about this approach, we can arm ourselves with further options, with each community better able to determine the best approach for its residents.



Featured Articles

- Firewise Community Example- Painted Rocks, Montana
- Firewise Chat with Jack Cohen and Sarah McCaffrey
- Home saved in North Port, Florida
- Firewise Initiatives
 - Firewise Project Award
 - Firewise Community Protection Achievement Commendations

Share a Helpful Hint!

Do you have a helpful hint or article you would like to share with others? Send it to Firewise Communities, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169.

THE FIREWISE COMMUNITY — EXAMPLE

PAINTED ROCKS, MONTANA — INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF PREPARE/GO EARLY/OR STAY & DEFEND

One of two communities within the U.S. that have begun implementing Prepare/Go Early/or Stay & Defend (PGESD) is Painted Rocks, in western Montana. On June 27, 2009, Alan Tresemer, battalion chief for the Painted Rocks Fire and Rescue Company, conducted training for residents of the Painted Rocks and West Fork fire districts that introduced the PGESD concept for responding to a wildfire threat. Six instructors with a combined experience of more than 200 years in fire and community-protection presented eight hours of detailed information and hands-on training to members of the local community.

Although the program received approval in 2007, it is not without its detractors, among them the local sheriff, Chris Hoffman. In a blog on the website of the local newspaper, *Ravalli Republic*, Hoffman posted a comment that implored, "... Finally, Alan and PRVF, once and for all, please quit pushing this idea in Ravalli County. Concentrate your efforts towards the 'fire wise' portions of your plan and stop encouraging people to risk their lives by 'staying.'"

In spite of the controversy spurred by such comments, Painted Rocks has moved forward with its program. Robert Mutch, a Painted Rocks resident and wildfire consultant with nearly 50 years of firefighting experience, responded to naysayers on the *Ravalli Republic* blog, noting: "It is hard to



This home in Painted Rocks Fire District has a non-flammable roof, rock foundation, irrigated lawn, and there is a river directly behind the home to serve as a water source in an emergency.

fault the concept of Prepare/Go Early/or Stay & Defend as practiced in some parts of Australia and in the Painted Rocks Fire District. First and foremost, everyone prepares his/her home and property to be fire resistant and fire safe. That must be done well in advance of the fire season. When that is accomplished to a high standard, it has led to a saying in Australia that 'people protect homes and homes protect people.' This is a mandatory measure for people to live compatibly in our fire-prone interface areas in Montana – they must prepare. Once that is done, people have two choices: they may want to Go Early, or they may choose to Stay & Defend their home against the ember fires that are easily suppressed. Going Early means leaving really early. Sometimes in Australia they evacuate a 'Very High to Extreme' fire danger day when there is not even a fire on the horizon. Staying & Defending is appropriate for able-bodied people who are physically prepared with the proper clothing and equipment; and psychologically prepared for the noise and sight of intense wildfire."

To help residents understand what it is like when a wildfire passes through their property, Tresemer and his fellow instructors played videos that

demonstrated the power, speed, and destructiveness of uncontrolled fire. "They learned why they must make their plans now rather than wait until a fire approaches," said Tresemer. "We showed them hundreds of pictures of good and bad fuel mitigation so that they can go home and spot the problems at their homes. They left with a much better understanding of the fire environment and their tasks to reduce the danger."

Mutch also noted that "People do not want to engage in the third option that has



Alan Tresemer, Battalion Chief for Painted Rocks Fire District.



Bob Mutch, resident of Painted Rock is a wildfire consultant with nearly 50 years of wildland fire fighting experience.

occurred all too often in Australia and the United States – and that is the option of evacuating late. Fifteen civilians died in California wildfires in October 2003 because the wildfires were spreading faster than evacuation warnings could get to the people from law enforcement personnel. In every case but one these people's homes burned to the ground. Think what a different outcome there might have been if the people had prepared their homes and property to be truly fire safe and then taken refuge in the safety of their home, rather than face the flames and death on the road. These fifteen people perished by burning to death when the evacuation process failed."

THE FIREWISE COMMUNITY — EXAMPLE *(continued)*

PAINTED ROCKS, MONTANA — INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF PREPARE/GO EARLY/OR STAY & DEFEND

That said, the PGESD approach does emphasize evacuation, so long as it is done well ahead of the approaching fire. The emphasis is on early. Said Tresemer: “We want EVERYBODY to prepare their homes as if they were going to stay and defend, but our emphasis is on EARLY evacuation. These preparations make it safer for them and for firefighters who can then safely defend unoccupied homes.”

He added, “Year after year, people are killed during wildland fires because they are not prepared and make last-moment deadly decisions. People die during late evacuation, or sometimes it is because they do not believe they will ever face such challenges. The program in Painted Rocks strives to teach our community about the dangers and the simple but effective steps they can take to protect their lives and property.”

He continued, “I encourage all property owners and residents to learn more about wildland fire and Firewise methods, and to take the steps to make their homes more resistant to fire. Ultimately, the choices are simple: either leave early, or stay and defend. In either case, you must prepare your home to make it a safer environment.

Then he concluded, “If you lived in tornado country, you might intend to evacuate, but you better also have a tornado shelter and plan what to do if a tornado visits. Anything less would be irresponsible and foolish. Planning for wildfire is no different; ultimately, your safety is your responsibility.”

How-To Newsletter thanks Robert Mutch, a resident of Painted Rocks who also is a wildfire consultant, for the information and photographs provided for this *Community Example*.



Instructor uses a sandbox display to discuss wildfire and evacuation with residents.

Debunking Myths About Prepare/Go Early/or Stay and Defend

by Mike Rogers and Robert Mutch

THE BASIC PREMISE: For people to successfully evacuate early or successfully stay and defend their home, first and foremost they must prepare defensible space around their home and meet fire-resistant building codes, regulations, and requirements. Defensible space and fire-resistant homes accomplished well ahead of the fire season will permit the effective execution of the other two tactics: *Going Early or Staying & Defending*. If home and yard have not been prepared to be fire resistant then the only safe tactic is *Go Early*—really early. However, leaving a well-maintained, fire-resistant property “early” does increase the probability that the home will survive and still be there when the homeowner/resident that leaves early is allowed to return.

MYTH: Residents who choose to stay and defend will die in their homes.

FACT: Most victims perish while attempting to evacuate, usually going at the very last minute.

MYTH: A myth perpetuated by the media is that homes literally explode as wildfires enter the wildland/urban interface.

FACT: Jack Cohen’s exhaustive research studies have shown this is not true. Older homes built prior to new code requirements will eventually need to be retrofitted before P/GE/SD can be effectively implemented. Without being retrofitted with non-combustible roofs, dual-glazed or tempered glass windows, and ember trapping under eave, gable end and roof vents, older homes will continue to be highly vulnerable to wind-blown embers. Loss of a home to embers can occur prior to the arrival of the main fire front, but mostly occurs hours after the main fire front passes through.

MYTH: Homes in the interface generally are ignited by the adjacent flames of a crown fire.

FACT: As stated above, homes in the interface generally are ignited by small wind-blown embers. Ignited homes are lost often hours after the main fire front passes. If someone is present, these small ember ignitions can be easily suppressed. If no one is present, a home may easily burn to the ground much later.

MYTH: Homes threatened by wildfire will not provide a safe refuge for people.

FACT: Homes repeatedly have provided a safe refuge for both firefighters and residents, shielding them from the radiant heat and dense smoke that accompany wildfires. Homes may eventually ignite, but by that time it is usually safe for people to go back outside because the main front has passed.

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Q & A Chat with Jack Cohen and Sarah McCaffrey



Jack D. Cohen is a research physical scientist for the Rocky Mountain Research Station, USDA Forest Service, Missoula, Montana. His research on the causes and context of Wildland/Urban Interface fire disasters has created a body of knowledge for application by others and his conception of the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) and its application has guided the Firewise Communities efforts, nationally, regionally, and locally.



Sarah M. McCaffrey, PhD, is a research social scientist for the Northern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, Evanston, Illinois. Currently, she is responsible for a National Fire Plan program examining social acceptability of fuels treatments and fire management efforts and co-principal investigator on several Joint Fire Science grants, including a longitudinal assessment of changes in public views of fire management and a project examining individual response to voluntary and involuntary incentives to mitigate fire hazards.

HT: What are the most important things residents need to know about preparing themselves for a wildfire that's approaching?

SM: The first thing residents should know is that they shouldn't wait until a wildfire is approaching to prepare themselves. The most effective things that they can do take time and are best done well before a wildfire approaches. These include managing the vegetation around their property and addressing structural characteristics that can make their home more fire-resistant. There is a lot of information available offering details about important actions that can be undertaken before a wildfire approaches. For example, residents should know about likely fire behavior and have already discussed what their household will do if there was a fire in the area. This includes identifying the trigger conditions that would lead to the planned action, and identifying multiple evacuation routes. When the wildfire is approaching they need to assess their planned actions and pay attention to their environment and not depend on emergency services to tell them what to do. While emergency services will certainly be providing all the assistance they can, fire behavior can change rapidly and may not allow for timely warning.

JC: Residents first need to understand why they need to prepare. They need to think about and prepare for the extreme-case wildfire in their area with the realization that they will likely require self reliance. They need to recognize that during extreme wildfire conditions a wildfire that overwhelms the initial suppression response will likely grow rapidly and be uncontrollable until fuel, weather, and topographic conditions significantly change, resulting in reduced wildfire spread rate and burning intensity. That means an extreme wildfire can spread to a residential area and simultaneously expose numerous homes to ignition from firebrands (flying embers) and flames. When numerous homes readily ignite, firefighters are overwhelmed and unable to protect homes. This results in totally destroyed homes. However, residents have readily available opportunities for significantly reducing their homes' ignition potential. Residents need to recognize that they can prepare and maintain their homes to be ignition-resistant during extreme wildfires.

Homeowners must recognize that preparation and most maintenance must occur before a threatening wildfire. For example, changing a roof covering from flammable wood shakes or shingles cannot be done when the wildfire threat is obvious. Likewise, reducing the vegetation density to prevent high intensity burning within 100 feet of the house requires possible contracting and days of heavy

work; it is not a last-minute activity. Typically homeowners can eliminate any chance of surface fire from spreading to and igniting within 5 to 10 feet of the house in a day or two. Maintenance activities such as removing flammable litter from gutters, roofs, and decks and removing firewood and lumber piles from on and next to the house are seasonal activities. Homeowners must also assure that flammable structures connected to and adjacent to the house do not ignite and spread to the house. If it's attached to the house, consider it part of the house. Remember, more details for 'Firewise' practices can be found on the Firewise web site.

HT: What are some ways that homeowners get information about wildfire emergencies?

SM: There are a variety of ways homeowners learn about wildfire emergencies. People triangulate information from numerous sources including community meetings, call-in centers, friends and neighbors, news media, information kiosks, Inciweb, blogs, and their own visual assessment. The source they choose to turn to most will depend on the credibility, timeliness, and perceived accuracy of the information from that source. Maps are a particularly useful information source, but it is important that they be accurate and detailed. To address expectations about real-time information, it is important that homeowners are told how often information and maps will be updated and why these limits exist.

JC: Commonly, when a wildfire becomes a fire emergency—i.e. extreme wildfire behavior imminently threatening a residential area—reliable information is scarce. This is a principal reason why wildfire preparation is so important. That includes preparation for home ignition resistance and preparation for evacuating family members, personal effects, and animals. At times other than the emergency situation, the Internet, community meetings, community central postings of maps and daily situation reports, local news sources, and local 'hotlines' can serve as sources for information. Although local emergency management systems may be well organized and effective during the wildfire emergency situation, do not count on reliable information and guidance from emergency managers. You may have to make self-judgments regarding the safest actions to take. If you are not comfortable with the possibility of making such judgments, you should still prepare as if you would stay, but plan to leave before evacuation becomes an emergency if the wildfire situation provides the opportunity.

HT: What have you found in your research that makes a difference in safety during wildfires – both home survival and life safety?

SM: My research doesn't look specifically at safety, but in general I would say the more clearly one understands the relevant dynamics of wildfire – general fire behavior, particularly how fast a fire can move in certain conditions; how a house catches on fire in a wildfire; how wildfires threaten life; and specific actions that can be undertaken to minimize exposure – the more likely someone would be to make the best decisions to improve safety and survival.

JC: As a research physical scientist, I explore the physical characteristics of how ignitions occur and fires burn. I have found that home destruction typically begins with small ignitions rather than large engulfing flames. My computational modeling, laboratory and field experiments, and WUI fire disaster examinations indicate the house characteristics, its materials and design—in relation to burning objects within 30 meters (100 ft)—principally determine the home ignition potential during extreme WUI fires. I call this area the home ignition zone (HIZ). The HIZ provides opportunities for increasing life safety and home survival without necessarily having to control a wildfire or change its fire behavior beyond the HIZ. Actions that increase home survival and thereby life safety principally occur within the HIZ. Increasing HIZ ignition-resistance begins with the house and works outward to about 30 meters (100 ft). The Firewise web site provides guidance for homeowners to readily improve a home's chances to survive an extreme wildfire and thus increase the life safety of homeowners and firefighters.

H-T: Do you know of communities that have had success in their evacuation planning or carrying out alternatives to evacuation during a wildfire? If so, what has allowed them to succeed?

JC: The southern California residential developments of Stevenson Ranch and Rancho Santa Fe provide examples of how home and community-wide, ignition-resistant HIZs increase life safety and effective property protection. Southern California's extreme wildfires spread to these residential areas in 2003 and 2007 without home destruction or significant threats to life safety. Both these residential areas had designed and maintained ignition-resistant HIZs that provided their 'Firewise' condition. Apparently these communities and community leaders had the vision of wildfire-compatible homes and the ability to engage homeowners in the implementation of Firewise practices. Incidentally, this is exactly what the Firewise Communities/USA program and the Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone course (both products of the 'Firewise' Program) facilitate—homeowner engagement through understanding and personal ownership of the WUI fire problem.

H-T: How can communities improve their communications to ensure that homeowners get the information they need during wildfire emergencies, to ensure home survival and life safety?

SM: Again the key is the work that has been done before the wildfire emergency happens. Good communication and planning before a fire facilitates effective communication during a fire. This can help ensure that relevant government agencies have established coordination protocols in terms of response and communication responsibilities, and that homeowners already have a sense of what will likely happen if there is a wildfire. Such advance preparation decreases the likelihood of contradictory and/or confusing information

being provided when a fire happens. During a wildfire, information that is provided should be direct and transparent. Uncertainty makes people uncomfortable and they do not want to be placated or "calmed down." Instead they want to be provided with timely, accurate information that tells them specifically how they may be affected by the fire, what they need to be doing to protect their homes and lives, and what is being done to manage the fire and why.

JC: Extreme WUI fires overwhelm the ability to react and respond. That's why I think the communications about WUI fire home survival and life safety should largely be in the preparation for, rather than in reaction to, wildfire. What I am proposing is a change of approach—from one of reaction/response to one of preparation and situational awareness. Consider this: Incident information cannot keep pace with rapid fire growth, particularly related to firebrand ignitions more than half- to one mile ahead of the main fire. What's more, firefighters cannot control the extreme wildfire spread, nor can they protect the broad area of residential ignition exposure. A more effective approach to extreme WUI fire involves preparation—preparation of ignition-resistant HIZs and knowledgeable residents. This produces increased home survival and life safety by transforming an extreme wildfire from a WUI fire emergency situation to a tenable wildfire occurrence. Thus, communications with communities should engage homeowners in preparing HIZs and residents well before an extreme WUI fire.

H-T: Are there community characteristics that make a difference in the success of evacuation or alternatives (safe zones, stay-and-defend)? (For example: rural vs urban, road layout, demographics.)

JC: My research has not addressed factors that influence successful evacuation. The success of evacuation alternatives largely relate to the factors influencing residential ignition potential. Much of my above discussion generally addresses these factors.

H-T: What are your thoughts on the concept of Prepare/Go Early/Stay & Defend?

JC: My strong support of Prepare to Stay and Defend, even if planning to leave early, is principally about enhanced life safety options for residents and agency responders. Often, extreme wildfire behavior can spread to communities quickly – much faster than the emergency response. It is easy for officials to say, "leave early," but there are no explicit criteria for when to leave early. Too frequently, residents are left with no information and no understanding during an oncoming wildfire, making preparation their only recourse. Evacuations are too frequently conducted by the least trained, least prepared officials – law enforcement officers. And all too often, a life safety evacuation degenerates into an authority confrontation with law enforcement officers, which further reduces life safety options for all involved. It's also important to note that "defend" does not mean wildfire suppression or structure firefighting. That is what typically fails during extreme fire conditions. Preparing, on the other hand, is the recognition that wildfires under extreme conditions are inevitable, that a safe evacuation might not be possible, and the understanding that opportunities exist and are implemented to enhance home survival, and thereby enhance life safety.

Around the Firewise Home

Autumn Cleanup

Every season offers an opportunity to take action that can benefit your home and property in the event of a wildfire. Autumn is a particularly critical season for conducting cleanup since it not only readies your home for a new season, but also allows you to truly see the results of your labors.

Autumn – also known as Fall, since that’s what leaves do from the many trees on your property – creates an environment ripe for cleanup. Leaves, which can easily ignite if touched by embers, can nestle in gutters and other untended corners of your home. The same goes for downed twigs and branches that may litter your property.



Part of creating a safe home ignition zone is removing all debris that can offer fire the opportunity to ignite. Ladder fuels such as tall grasses, low-hanging limbs, and loose leaves and twigs should be tended to, particularly within 100 feet of your home – or more, depending on the slope of your property and proximity to wooded areas.

To make the most of your fall cleanup, include the following on your list of chores:

- Rake, rake, and rake some more, removing all leaf debris from your home ignition zone.
- Pay special attention to gutters and corners where leaves and other debris can accumulate, and clear them out.
- Limb up trees within your home ignition zone and remove all resulting debris from your property.
- Mow grasses to prevent them from growing too high and offering wildfire the first rung on the fuel ladder.
- Make sure wood piles are well away from your home, at least 30 feet from any structure.
- Consider Firewise landscaping options; some planting is best done in the fall. (Consult your local master gardener or cooperative extension for the best information on plants for your region.)
- Consider including concrete or stone pathways, and/or stone walls and curbs in your landscaping design, creating natural firebreaks on your property.
- Assess your property for downed limbs and branches and have them removed.



Beyond your own property, consider Autumn an opportune time to hold a community event, such as a chipper or mulching day. The more involved all members of your community are in preparing their property throughout the year, the better each and every one of you will be prepared should a wildfire strike close to home.

Firewise Your Pets!

In a recent blog, Jeffrey Sabatini provided some basic preparations and recommendations that should be included in your evacuation plan during a wildland fire. We have excerpted and condensed some of his helpful hints here. Jeffrey is with the San Bernardino County Fire Department's Emergency Communication Service. To read the full blog, sign in at MyFirewise at <http://network.firewise.org> and look for Jeffrey's profile page.



1) Make sure your animals are wearing an identification tag providing dog or cat's first and family name, phone number with area code, and an email address if possible. Also consider having your pet micro-chipped. In addition, put together an ID kit with photos, vaccine records, pet's local tag number, city or county rabies tag number, microchip or tattoo ID numbers and registry contact information.

2) Be sure your pet is up-to-date with vaccination and have documentation with you. Many kennels will not take pets without the proper vaccinations. In addition, establish a re-

lationship with several boarding facilities further out from your home area.

3) If your pet takes any medications, make sure that they are well labeled and part of your evacuation kit.

4) Be sure you have a topical flea and tick treatment for each type of pet you have. Note that flea collars can melt or give off strong fumes in high temperatures.

5) If you have an exotic pet, such as a pot bellied pig, ferret, python or other... know ahead which facilities will accept them.

Jeffrey also received some important information from another blogger about cats. Apparently cats have a tendency head to their favorite hiding spot or will bolt from danger at the sight of the first open door. It is recommended that owners buy an airline-approved traveling crate, get the cat in the crate early on, and get the cat used to wearing a well fitted body harness as cats can easily slip out of a collar.



Debunking Myths About Prepare/Go Early/or Stay & Defend (continued from page 3)

MYTH: People seeking refuge in a home threatened by wildfire will be asphyxiated.

FACT: People, both residents and firefighters, often have been effectively sheltered by a home that blocks radiant heat and smoke. The dense smoke problems affecting human health are caused by outdoor smoke, not indoor smoke.

MYTH: When wildfires threaten homes during periods of extreme fire danger, the Fire Service will save them.

FACT: Wildfires that start during periods of very high to extreme fire danger will quickly overwhelm fire services, because they will not be able to keep up with all the new ignitions in the interface. It must be understood that there are hundreds or thousands of engines and tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of homes in the interface. There will not be an engine at every home. The good news is that if people prepare well for defensible space around their home and have a fire resistant home, their property can survive a wildfire even when the fire services are not available.

MYTH: Some people are saying that anyone can stay inside their home and ride out the firestorm after preparing home and property to be fire resistant.

FACT: Only able-bodied, properly prepared adults should consider staying behind to defend their well-prepared, fire-resistant homes. Children, infirm people, and elderly residents should leave early, well before the arrival of any wind-blown embers or flames.

MYTH: Some people are suggesting that the strategy of Prepare/Go Early/Stay and Defend can be applied in all communities.

FACT: The houses that have been burning in wildland/urban interface fires were not in planned communities with adequate individual fuel treatment zones (homes in newer planned communities are not burning). Older communities, however, can be retrofitted and there is grant money available to make structures ignition resistant, but this requires every homeowner/resident to agree to and actually modify their structure to updated fire codes.

MYTH: Prepare/Go Early/or Stay & Defend is being brought forward as a planning strategy to be used where there is only one way in and one way out and timely evacuation of a proposed planned community is not possible.

FACT: Prepare, Go Early or Stay & Defend is not used in lieu of not having adequate evacuation routes. Prepare, Go Early or Stay & Defend cannot work as a viable strategy without evacuation routes.

CONCLUSIONS:

Although sheriff's department officers tried to force people in the Upper West Fork into an evacuation mode in 2000, many homeowners knew they were well-prepared to stay and defend their own property and refused to go. Montana state law states that people who choose to stay must sign a waiver to that effect, absolving local authorities of responsibility.

The traditional culture of law enforcement and fire service officials in the United States is generally one where they just want people removed to get them out of the way. Although Australian officials have evolved to implement Prepare, Go Early or Stay & Defend over the past 60 years, that same outlook does not prevail in the United States at this time. Even in Australia it took decades before law enforcement officials supported the program positively.

When you think about the Australian concept, it is difficult to argue with the idea of Going Early or Staying to Defend after Preparing fire-resistant homes and property. Going early is instrumental in avoiding the very real hazards of late evacuation; and staying to defend safe property can provide a big boost to overwhelmed fire services. It is a strategy where the homeowner steps up to be a real part of the solution to the interface problem.

The national Firewise program advocates year-round preparation for your home and community to make it more resistant to potential ignitions from wildfire. The strategies and concepts regarding evacuation and the immediate threat of wildfire described here are the expert opinions of fire researchers and fire service professionals. Firewise recommends working with your local authorities to understand the regulations and procedures of your community in the event of a wildfire. While using Firewise principles can make your home safer, the program provides no guarantee of complete safety from wildfire.

The Firewise Leader

It Bears Repeating — Renew!



While anytime of year can be good for assessing whether to submit your renewal information, the best time is now -- especially if you haven't gotten around to it yet. Fire season is either waning or a distant memory, you likely have conducted your community event

and activity, and you can gather any documentation needed to complete the process. To further facilitate the process, www.firewise.org now offers a new web-based form.

The renewal form helps to verify that your community is continuing its work and can show if there has been any update or changes to your community plan. It also allows you to report on increased activity beyond your annual event and activity, as well as to document volunteer hours and the \$2 per capita investment for the renewal year, and to provide any updates concerning contacts.

As with applications for recognition status, renewal forms must be submitted no later than December 31, 2009 to be recognized for the current year. To access the web-based

form go to: http://www.firewise.org/usa/app_renewal.htm. The form may also be downloaded, printed, faxed or emailed to the Firewise program.

The form goes automatically to program staff, who then notify the state liaison of the renewal and process necessary paperwork. You will receive an e-mail with notice of renewal from program staff.

Editor's Note: If you are proud of your community's efforts or think you have a unique activity that could benefit other Firewise communities, please share the information with "How-To Newsletter" by submitting a description of your activity and how it has helped with wildfire mitigation in your community to Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org.

On the Lighter Side of Firewise

(Editor's Note: It appears that at least two of our Firewise Communities have gotten really creative and established Firewise Precision Drill Teams. Perry Park, Colorado was the first back in 2006 headed by Keith Worley. Now it appears they have a little competition from San Juan Island, Washington with an alternative motive - bringing more homeowners into the fold to become Firewise. We want to thank Ron Garner, San Juan Firewise Coordinator for submitting the information to Firewise.)

Friday Harbor Home of World Champions

On June 27, 2009 the Firewise Precision Drill Team World Championships were held in Friday Harbor, WA. A group of San Juan Island Firewise residents and Fire Department members joined together to create a team to enter the competition.



San Juan Island, Washington Precision Drill Team

In the only other competition three years ago, a Colorado team was the only entry and declared themselves World Champions. The local team took on the

challenge by forming the San Juan Island Firewise Precision (easy on the precision) Drill (not much on the drill) Team. After hours of discussion and planning (well at least 15 minutes) the team started their extensive days of practices (two half hour days to be exact). They became extremely skilled considering that only half the team showed up for each of those extensive drills. You can't find a more devoted bunch in the nation. Oh, that brings up the fact that the other entries were very limit. At the time of the judging, no other teams could be located so the San Juan team was declared the World Champions and presented with the first place plaque.

The Team hopes that some of the folks that enjoyed their performance will consider joining the Firewise Communities protecting themselves from wildfire. For more information contact Ron Garner at rggarner@interisland.net.



Perry Park Colorado Precision Team, 2006

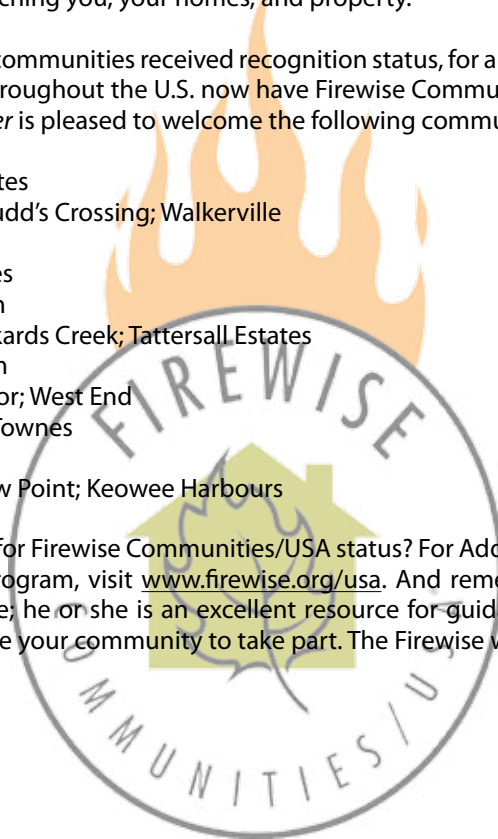
Firewise By The Numbers

Firewise Communities/USA are spreading like, well, wildfire. The only difference is we don't want to contain you. We want to sustain you and help you spread to neighboring communities, so in the event of a wildfire, more of you are prepared to prevent fire from reaching you, your homes, and property.

Since our Summer issue, 18 new communities received recognition status, for a total of 488 communities with Firewise status. Thirty-eight states throughout the U.S. now have Firewise Communities/USA recognition signs along their roadways. *How-To Newsletter* is pleased to welcome the following communities:

Arizona – Ancala West Estates
Arkansas – East Cypress; Rudd's Crossing; Walkerville
California – Fawnskin
Florida – Indian Lake Estates
Georgia – Walnut Mountain
Kentucky – Dunnville; Lookards Creek; Tattersall Estates
Massachusetts – Nat's Farm
Montana – St Regis; Superior; West End
North Carolina – Colonial Townes
Oklahoma – Yuba
South Carolina – Chickasaw Point; Keowee Harbours

Think your community should try for Firewise Communities/USA status? For Additional information on the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program, visit www.firewise.org/usa. And remember, you can contact your state forest service liaison for assistance; he or she is an excellent resource for guidance in formulating your plan and offering activities that can energize your community to take part. The Firewise web site includes this contact information as well.



Firewise In Action – A Home Saved in North Port, Florida

We spend a lot of page space promoting the Firewise principles that can protect your home and community. Unless wildfire has struck very close to home, though, you may still wonder, "is all this effort worth it?"

In a word, absolutely! But perhaps it's best to look to real-life examples to make the case. Such as Sam Jones of North Port Estates, in Florida.

Earlier this year, the *North Port Community News* reported on Jones' good fortune in the aftermath of wildfire, thanks to his Firewise efforts. The fires – 16 of them throughout the community – had been sparked by lightning strikes and burned the thick vegetation of woods adjacent to Jones' property. Yet his two-story, custom-built home was unscathed.

The news article reported that when Jones went outside to check his property after being asked how his home had fared (neither he, his wife or daughters had been home when the fire started), he was amazed to find charred 70-foot trees on the edge of his property line.

A former city planner, Jones had created a Firewise plan before his home was built. The plan to stop a fire from the wooded area worked. Although there were scorched sections of woods, there was no damage to his home.

The article noted Jones' wish to tell others how important creating a Firewise plan is for residents who live near thick brush. His message applies to anyone living anywhere in the wildland/urban interface.

How-To referenced "Estates resident's home saved through Firewise program," by Elaine Allen-Emrich, appearing in the *North Port Community News*.

Firewise Multi-Tier Initiatives

Firewise Project Achievement Award

Throughout the year, Firewise staff hear about wonderful Firewise activities all over the U.S., whether they are demonstration projects at public sites, a Firewise Home of the Month, or an effort to conduct home-by-home risk assessments. Many of these projects are in places where the community has not yet been recognized as a Firewise Communities/USA site, or are undertaken by entities such as state parks or stand-alone facilities that simply aren't eligible for the recognition because they don't meet the criteria as a residential community. What if there were a way to capture all of that great information, tell more people about it, and encourage those folks doing the work to engage their colleagues and neighbors?



Well, now there is a way. The Firewise program is now issuing awards for all kinds of projects that use Firewise principles. We'll provide a sign indicating a Firewise Project and a letter with more information about other Firewise resources. Those commended projects will be featured periodically in our *How To Newsletter* and on the Firewise website. We have a number of projects we know about that will begin receiving this award, and we want to hear from you about likely nominees. Look for information soon on the Firewise Home Page to nominate your Favorite Firewise Project for this special award. Nominations will be accepted year-round and materials issued monthly.

Firewise Community Protection Certificate

Along with the great projects we hear about, Firewise staff also know that many jurisdictions are doing a tremendous job of addressing home safety through their Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). These plans are a requirement under the federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act legislation for communities adjacent to public land, and help prioritize funding for wildfire fuel reduction projects. They include a requirement to address structural ignitability, and many have chosen to use the Firewise model to help residents make their homes less vulnerable.



This Fall, the Firewise program is providing a new Firewise Community Protection Certificate to the CWPP proponents who include Firewise principles in their plans and who document neighborhoods that achieve Firewise Communities/USA recognition. Look for more information about nominating CWPPs for this special award by the end of 2009.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION



Web Sources

To access information addressed in this issue of *How-To Newsletter*, visit the following websites:

- MyFirewise — <http://network.firewise.org/>
- Resources for Life Safety in Wildfires — http://www.firewise.org/resources/resources_for_life.htm
- Firewise Archives — <http://www.firewise.org/library/index.php>



Online Learning Center

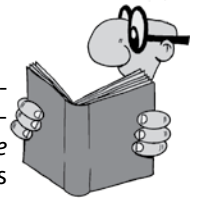
In August, Firewise added a **NEW!** online course, "**Conducting a Community Assessment in the Wildland/Urban Interface: Beginning the Firewise Process.**" The free course walks users through a tested methodology for conducting community wildfire hazard assessments. It provides learners with a thorough understanding of how homes ignite during wildfires, how simple actions can greatly reduce home ignitions, and how community behavior change can create Firewise homes and communities.

Be sure to visit www.firewise.org to check it out! Just click on "Learning Center" in the top menu bar. (Bonus: The first 50 to complete the course and provide comments via e-mail can win a prize! Prizes limited to non-federal employees only.)

Firewise Literary Corner

Reading Up

Want to learn more about Firewise landscaping? For the cost of shipping and handling order a copy of "*Firewise: Where We Live, How We Live*". The publication provides in-depth information about how to make your property both beautiful and Firewise-friendly.



Missing a Firewise Article or Newsletter?

Fear Not! Instead, visit the Firewise Article Archive at www.firewise.org/library/index.php. You'll have access to countless Firewise articles at the click of your mouse!



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