



HELPFUL RESOURCES

These resources will additionally provide aid in understanding the interaction between wildfire behavior and the home ignition zone:

E-learning: Understanding the Wildfire Threat to Homes

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Online-learning-opportunities/Online-courses>

How to Prepare Homes for Wildfire: Actions that Reduce Risk – Tips and Resources

<https://www.nfpa.org/preparinghomesforwildfire>

Wildfire Research Fact Sheets: This series provides important research findings that can improve a home's chances of surviving a wildfire.

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Firewise-USA-Resources/Research-Fact-Sheet-Series>

Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) provides the research for the fact sheets, videos demonstrating ember ignition of homes, and recommendations for action included in this tutorial.

<https://disastersafety.org/wildfire/>

PROGRAM DEFINITIONS:

Dwelling Unit: Household/residence built for occupancy by one person, a family, or roommates, including mobile homes and cabins, and for multi-family residential occupancies (i.e. duplexes, and other types of attached housing). An apartment building with 10 units would be considered 10 dwelling units.

Flashing: Components used to weatherproof or seal roof system edges at perimeters, penetrations, walls, expansion joints, valleys, drains and other places where the roof covering is interrupted or terminated.

Hardscaping: Non-living elements of landscaping, such as paved areas, driveways, retaining walls, and walkways.

Home hardening: Steps to improve the chance of your home surviving a wildfire through installing/retrofitting with ignition resistant materials.

Home Ignition Zone: The home and everything around it out to 100 feet. The condition of the home and surrounding landscape within 100 feet will influence the ignitability of the structure.

Skirting: Material used around the bottom of homes and sometimes decks to protect the underside from exposure to embers, debris accumulation, and other hazards. Recommended materials for wildfire safety include masonry, cement board, or metal.

Firewise USA® Action Plan: A prioritized list of risk reduction projects/investments for the participating site, along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually, or over a period of multiple years. The submitted action plan should be broken down by year and reflect those goals (with examples attached). This document is required to be updated at least **every three years**. As circumstances change (e.g., completing activities, experiencing a fire or a natural disaster, new construction in community, etc.), the action plan may need to be updated more frequently.

Firewise USA® Community Wildfire Risk Assessment: An assessment that focuses on the risk of home ignition from wildfires by looking at the conditions of the homes and surrounding home ignition zones. It is used to help guide residents on the most effective actions to prevent home ignitions and wildfire disasters. This document is required to be updated at least **every five years**.

Firewise® Board or Committee: A group comprised of residents and other applicable stakeholders. Consider inviting the local fire department, state forestry agency, elected officials, emergency manager, and, if applicable, the property management company to participate. The board/committee will guide the efforts of the Firewise USA® site, using the risk assessment to identify and prioritize activities in the action plan.

Firewise® Resident Leader: A member of the community that is designated as the lead for a Firewise USA® site and is a part of the Firewise® board or committee. They are the primary contact between the community and the program, responsible for completing the initial recognition application and annual renewal application via the online management portal (Firewise® Portal). A site may have more than one designated resident leader assigned in the Firewise® Portal.

State Liaison: Typically, the employee of the organization that hosts the official state forester. This person is designated by the state forester, is responsible for setting the direction of Firewise USA® implementation in the state and is the state's main contact to the national program. They are also responsible for reviewing and approving new site applications and may choose to review annual renewal applications. A list of state liaisons can be found on NFPA's website, <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise®-USA/Become-a-Firewise®-USA-site/Contact-your-state-liaison>.

Voluntary Recognition Program: Firewise USA® is a volunteer program that provides a set of criteria that residents choose to work toward — it is not required for individuals in wildfire prone areas to participate in or be a part of in order to take risk reduction actions.

Firewise USA® was loosely modeled after the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program, enabling residents to come together voluntarily to meet a set of criteria that qualify them for national recognition. This means that residents choose to be involved and determine their site's boundaries. When they meet the Firewise USA® criteria, they earn national recognition for doing so. Each year, when verifying they are continuing to reduce wildfire risks in the community, they continue to enjoy national recognition and remain in good standing by continuing to meet the criteria. Recognition comes in the form of signage and publicity on the [Firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org) website, at a minimum.

Firewise® Portal: Online community/Firewise USA® site management system. All new and renewal applications for recognition are completed via the portal.

Application for Recognition: In order to be a recognized participant in the Firewise USA® program, a site must meet program criteria and the online application found in the Firewise® portal must be filled out. There are eight steps to the application:

- **Step 1: Overview** – This includes the basic community information (contacts, size, location).
- **Step 2: Risk Assessment** – The wildfire community risk assessment must be uploaded into the application. It carries over each year until the five-year update cycle is reached.
- **Step 3: Board/Committee** – A site must acknowledge that they have a board/committee and may choose to share committee member names and email addresses. This provides NFPA with backup contacts in case the resident leader is unreachable.
- **Step 4: Action Plan** – The developed action plan must be uploaded to the application; it carries over each year until the three-year update cycle is reached.
- **Step 5: Educational Outreach** – Each participating site is required to hold a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or activity annually. Examples of acceptable events can be found in that section of the application.
- **Step 6: Vegetation Removal** – A major component of wildfire risk reduction is the removal of vegetation (shrubs, brush, limbs, trees, etc.) from individual properties and common-area property. Tracking vegetation removal provides forestry and fire agencies with information on the quantity of potential wildfire fuel that's been eliminated from the area(s). This section provides tools to help a community estimate its vegetation removal in cubic yards.
- **Step 7: Investment** – Investing the equivalent of one volunteer hour (valued at \$25.43) per residential dwelling unit within the site's boundary in annual wildfire risk reduction actions is a requirement of the national recognition program's criteria for maintaining an "In Good Standing" status. Annual investment information can be reported in hours worked or money spent.
- **Step 8: Review** – Verify that each component of the application has been filled out correctly before submitting the application.

Annual Renewal: In order to remain “In Good Standing” in the program participating sites will need to complete an annual renewal application. This application is typically due mid-November. Requirements are similar to the initial application for recognition. More information can be found online, <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Firewise-USA-Resources/Annual-renewal-information>.

Certificate of Recognition: Sites that successfully meet the participation requirements are provided a “Certificate of Recognition.” This is provided upon approval of the initial application for recognition and on an annual basis upon approval of the renewal application. The certificate can be accessed from the community’s dashboard on the Firewise® Portal.

Certified vs. Recognized: As described in the definition of Voluntary Recognition Program, Firewise USA® sites meet a set of criteria to earn national recognition and continue to meet specific criteria annually to remain in good standing with the program. The words “certified” and “certification” are not affiliated with the Firewise USA® program. To be “certified” implies that an individual has demonstrated specific competency in a job role or skill set. An example would be a certified electrical safety technician. Organizations can also be certified, generally meaning they meet qualifications that give them access to specific benefits or resources. An example would be the Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) certification that validates that a business is 51 percent owned, controlled, operated, and managed by a woman or women. Firewise USA® sites are not certified, and neither do individuals nor their properties within site boundaries receive certification.

Thank you to Jack Cohen, Ph.D., USFS retired, whose research influenced the recommendations and guidance provided. Much of his work can be accessed on the U.S. Forest Service Research & Development website, <https://www.fs.fed.us/research/people/profile.php?alias=jcohen>.

An additional article, An Analysis of Wildland-Urban Fire with Implications for Preventing Structure Ignitions, can be found at this link: https://www.eenews.net/assets/2019/01/08/document_gw_02.pdf