

What is Firewise?

Firewise USA® Communities: Protecting Our Neighborhood from Wildfire

Firewise USA® is a nationwide program of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) that brings people together to prepare for living with wildfire. The program teaches neighbors how to work as a community to reduce wildfire risk while maintaining the natural beauty of our landscape.

Our neighborhood has joined this important initiative. By working together, we can significantly reduce the threat that wildfire poses to our homes and community.

Why Firewise? Wildfire doesn't have to destroy our community. When neighbors take action together - clearing vegetation, maintaining homes, and reducing flammable materials - we create a resilient community that can better withstand wildfire threat.

What We're Doing:

- Community education and awareness
- Home-level assessments of defensible space
- Shared volunteer projects to reduce community-wide risk
- Annual cleanup days and ongoing maintenance

Page 2: Firewise Requirements

A Firewise community must meet these key requirements:

Size: Minimum 8 dwelling units and maximum 2,500 dwelling units with clearly defined boundaries.

Volunteer Investment: At least 1 volunteer hour per dwelling unit per year (or ~\$33–35 monetary equivalent). Examples include community cleanup days, tree trimming, fuel reduction projects, and educational workshops.

Governance & Planning:

- Form a Firewise Task Force Committee with resident volunteers
- Designate a community leader
- Create and maintain a site action plan documenting community risk assessment, mitigation projects, timeline, and maintenance schedule

Community Mitigation Work:

- Conduct community-wide risk assessment

- Document efforts in defensible space
- Maintain records of volunteer hours and completed projects
- Commit to annual maintenance and reassessment

Recognition & Ongoing Status:

- Submit application materials to NFPA
- Achieve Firewise USA® Community recognition status
- Renew status annually by documenting continued volunteer work and maintenance

Page 3: Understanding Defensible Space & The Three Zones

What is Defensible Space?

Defensible space is a zone of protection around your home where vegetation and flammable materials are carefully managed. This space gives firefighters room to work and reduces the chance that a wildfire will ignite your home.

Zone 0: Immediate Zone (0–5 feet) — "Ember-Resistant Zone"

This is the most critical zone.

What to do:

- Remove all dead leaves, needles, twigs, and branches from roof, gutters, and ground
- Remove limbs hanging over the roof
- Space trees so canopies don't touch (minimum 10-foot separation)
- Remove branches lower than 6–10 feet from the ground
- Keep leaves and needles from piling against the house or deck
- Remove or relocate propane BBQ grills away from the structure
- Clear leaves and needles from deck surfaces and railings
- Thin dense tree canopies so you can see through them

Zone 1: Intermediate Zone (5–30 feet) — "Lean, Clean, and Green" Zone

This zone creates an open, well-maintained transition where fire moves more slowly.

What to do:

- Space trees by removing small trees growing too close together
- Thin tree canopies so the lowest branches are 6–10 feet off the ground
- Maintain spacing so crowns of adjacent trees don't touch
- Remove dead trees and dead branches
- Remove branches from shrubs that hang over or are within 10 feet of tree canopies
- Selectively thin shrubs (leave some healthy vegetation)

- Keep grass and groundcover well-watered and less than 4 inches tall
- Remove dead annual grasses completely

Zone 2: Extended Zone (30–100 feet) — "Create Horizontal and Vertical Space" Zone

This outermost zone reduces embers and heat reaching your property.

What to do:

- Remove small trees between larger trees (thin dense stands)
- Remove dead and dying trees and large dead branches
- Space trees so canopies don't touch
- Remove branches overhanging from adjacent properties if they pose risk
- Maintain healthy shrub spacing and remove dead shrubs
- Clear accumulations of cones, needles, and bark from the ground
- Keep grass and groundcover maintained