How To:

Obtain and Maintain Your FWC Recognition Requirements

SUMMARY

The Firewise USA® program, led by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), offers a structured approach for communities to enhance their wildfire resilience in California. This initiative promotes collaborative efforts among residents, local fire departments, and other key stakeholders to bolster the fire resistance of homes and their surroundings.

Members of your community can substantially improve fire outcomes by working together to do things like removing downed tree branches, dry leaves, and pine needles. Volunteers can assist neighbors with extra support and participate in coordinated local efforts, like community green waste and chipping events.

STEPS

The following are the core requirements in order to obtain, and retain, your Firewise Community recognition status.

1. **Organize It.** Create a volunteer board or committee to represent your community with a designated resident leader as the point of contact. This can be easily done with access to a Homeowners Association (HOA) or similar local group.

   Establish the boundaries of the site to contain a minimum of eight (8) dwelling units and a maximum of 1500 dwelling units. Then, use the program portal to register your new community (portal.firewise.org/user/login).

2. **Plan It.** With a portal account established, follow the online guidelines to complete a community wildfire risk assessment. NFPA provides a free template and tutorial, with additional videos available on their website.

   The assessment needs to be updated at a minimum of every five (5) years. The risk assessment is the basis for creating a three-year action plan that identifies and prioritizes communitywide efforts to be taken each year. These may include overseeing local activities, events, investments, and homeowner education. (See the “How To Write a Successful Risk Assessment” guide.)

3. **Do It.** Complete the actions identified in your Three-Year Action Plan to satisfy annual participation requirements.

	Examples might include hosting community education workshops, distributing materials by print (or digitally), and organizing a Firewise Day. Document the community's collective volunteer hours throughout the year. Each site must invest the equivalent of one volunteer hour per dwelling unit, annually. So, a site with 100 homes requires 100 volunteer hours; or monetary equivalent for incurred costs. (See the "How to Write a Successful Action Plan" guide.) 4. **Report It.** After meeting the participation criteria, the resident leader submits their community's data to attain "In Good Standing Status" and become a recognized Firewise USA® site. Each year, sites renew their status by reporting their activity. (See the "How To Track and Report Hours and Costs" guide.)
TIPS	1. For additional guidance, read the specific "How To" document for each step listed above. 2. Utilize the free training available from NFPA: https://www.nfpa.org/en/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa/become-a-firewise-usa-site https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa https://www.nfpa.org/en/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa/Annual-renewal-information 3. Utilize the free training available from CALFIRE: https://readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/firewise-communities/ 4. Encourage member participation with the following messages: • Together, We Can Reduce Wildfire Risks • Neighbor Helping Neighbor • A Recognized FWC Qualifies YOU for Insurance Discounts • Defensible Space Saves Lives