How To:

Conduct a Successful FWC Work Day

PURPOSE

One of the requirements of maintaining Firewise Community recognition is to hold at least one community outreach/education event each year. A Firewise Community Work Day is one option. Working on community projects helps build camaraderie, lets community members get to know each other, and can be fun and educational. After a project is completed, community members take pride in knowing they contributed to reducing the risk of wildfire in the community. One successful project usually leads to more.

STEPS

1. Utilize your Risk Assessment and 3-Year Action Plan to develop your project concept. There are also times when an opportunity or idea pops up that makes a good community project that is not necessarily specifically stated in your Action Plan. Take advantage of these opportunities as they arise, especially if there is a high level of community interest in participating. Any project you do will have a positive impact.

2. Your Firewise Community committee should work together to select a project to work on. There is always plenty of work that needs to be done, so you will have to prioritize recommended projects based upon your available resources and capabilities. If microgrants are offered, money may be available to hire some professional help or rent equipment to take on a bigger project. Projects can fall into several categories:
   a. Evacuation Routes – Clearing vegetation along main evacuation routes, improving signage or adding turnouts are examples. When working along roads with traffic the biggest concern is making sure motorists slow down as they approach the work area. Road work signs and flaggers are essential and are also opportunities to engage and educate passersby.
   b. Scotch broom removal – Scotch broom and other non-native brooms are a fire hazard in our environment. When they build up to dense stands, they will burn at high intensity. Pulling the plants out by the roots or spraying the plants are the only effective methods of control. Shovels, weed wrenches and hand pulling can all be used, especially in winter when the soil is moist. Of course, the area will likely

have a large seed bank and new plants will germinate for several years, but a follow-up broom pull is much easier than the original removal of the large plants.

c. Assisting disabled and/or senior community members – Some people need assistance in basic home hardening and defensible space. Usually, they are willing to accept help and are thankful to the community for their concern. These projects generate significant goodwill and are newsworthy.

d. Prescribed burns – These burns are essential to maintain areas that have already had fuel reduction work of thinning, pruning and ladder fuel removal. Classes are offered by Nevada County and Placer County Resource Conservation Districts and UC Extension. When properly conducted, prescribed burns are safe and effective and are recognized by our local fire agencies as a good thing.

e. Other ideas – Use your imagination. Some communities have improved water sources for fire suppression or have created alternative evacuation routes.

3. Key components of a work project:
   a. Landowner permission - After selecting a project idea, the first thing you need is permission from the landowner(s) to work on their property. This can be a signed agreement or a verbal agreement, depending on your relationship. Be clear on what you are proposing.

   b. Schedule – Choose the time of the year when it is best to get the work done. Chainsaw work, burning and scotch broom removal are best done in cool, moist weather. Home hardening and road sign improvements can occur at almost any time. Depending on your community members' lifestyle, you may get more volunteers on weekends or weekdays. Consider that many people attend church on Sunday mornings.

   c. Round up volunteers – Get the word out as soon as possible regarding the work project and the dates. People need to plan ahead and they also need periodic reminders. Some people show up without an RSVP if they are reminded just before the work day. Stress the importance of the project to the community and provide details about what tools and personal protective equipment are necessary.

   d. Everyone can contribute – Some people cannot do heavy lifting or run a chainsaw. Find tasks for everyone ability level so they can all contribute. Some people can work on traffic

	control, hand out flyers, or bake some snacks for the work team. Other people might be capable of contributing some money to offset some of the project's costs. Find something for everyone to do. e. Set reasonable hours – Most people will only be capable of working 2-4 hours in a day. Some people may need to show up early to set up or may need to leave early. Do your best to accommodate your team members. f. Think safety – Consider the safety hazards of the work and review safety measures with your team before starting. One of the greatest hazards can be traffic whizzing by if you are working alongside a road. Use orange cones, signs and people in safety vests to slow traffic. g. Feed your team – During, and especially at the end of the work day, it is enjoyable to take a snack break and review the work you have accomplished. This is a good time for community members to socialize. Plan a post work day lunch or BBQ if possible. At a minimum provide some snacks and drinks. h. Keep good project records – Keep a list of the people that participated. These volunteer hours can be substantial and should be logged in your annual "Volunteer Hourly Worksheet". i. Promote your project –Take photos to share with your community or send to your Fire Safe Council, Yuba Net, and/or the Office of Emergency Services. These "feel good" promotions unify your neighbors and spotlight the effectiveness of your community. At your next Firewise meeting or newsletter, thank all the participants and let the other community members know how important and fun the project was.
TIPS	If your first few projects have a low participation level; don't give up! Sometimes teamwork takes a while to develop. Keep on planning for the next project and keep promoting the importance of your Firewise activities.