



Become Firewise

### **What is Firewise?**

A Firewise USA community is a neighborhood that's taken steps to lower the risk of wildfire damage to homes and properties. It's part of a national program that encourages people to work together with local fire departments and others to make their area safer from wildfires.

In a Firewise USA community, residents team up to put in place strategies to prevent wildfires, like clearing away flammable materials near homes, using fire-resistant building materials, and educating everyone about wildfire safety. People in these communities are actively involved in planning, doing, and keeping up with wildfire safety efforts.

### **What is "Recognition"?**

To become recognized as a Firewise USA community, a neighborhood or homeowners' association has to meet specific standards set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which runs the Firewise USA program. This includes assessing wildfire risks, making a plan to deal with them, putting that plan into action, and keeping everyone informed about wildfire safety.

The steps below are also available in a [Video Format](#).

### **Step 1**

Step 1 involves gathering your neighbors and creating an oversight board or committee. This committee will work together to make important decisions about fire safety in your community. Consider [contacting SCFSC](#) to do an orientation. We can go over the process and requirements. We can also schedule a field trip that goes over risks that can help with filling out the Risk Assessment. This usually involves local fire departments and or Cal Fire.

You will also need to identify a leader who will be the program's point of contact. Once the neighborhood committee is formed, its members will work together to identify the community's biggest fire risks, create a plan to reduce those risks over several years, and make sure the community stays on track with its fire safety goals. Each year the committee

will also take care of the annual renewal requirements needed to retain an “in good standing” status from Firewise USA.

### **Action Items:**

- Meet with your [County Coordinator](#) to review requirements.
- Schedule and promote an Orientation Meeting for the SCFSC Presentation (optional).
- Elect a Lead Contact, form a committee of two or more, and recruit volunteers.
- Create a Community Contact List and a system for updates.
- Now is a good time to create a Gmail and Google account with your Firewise Community name to keep Firewise communications separate from your personal emails. Google Drive is also a great place to store your Firewise documents. If you need help setting up Google, check out our [Firewise Toolkit](#).

The file below is one sheet of double-sided postcards. Download and add your email address to the provided field, then print as a double-sided page and cut the 4 postcards out to give to neighbors.

[Join FW Postcards\\_fillable\\_2024\\_11-compressedDownload](#)

### **Step 2**

Step 2 involves defining your community. A Firewise community can be as small as 8 houses or as large as 2,500 houses. Defining the physical boundaries of your community also determines how many individual homes are included. It’s possible to have multiple Firewise USA sites within a city, town, or planned community. If you’re unsure how to define your boundaries, or if you’re concerned about coordinating a large number of households, consider focusing on just your street or immediate neighborhood area. Please [contact your County Coordinator](#) to help define boundaries, as they can provide guidance about including additional properties and open spaces.

You will need to hold a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or activity annually. Sometimes, starting small is more manageable. A list of ideas is available in your Firewise portal. You will need to create an outlined map of your proposed Firewise community. The Shasta County Fire Safe Council or CalFire can assist you in creating or obtaining a map.

### **Action Items:**

- Work with SCFSC to create a parcel level map of the Community Boundary.

### **Step 3**

Step 3 is all about teamwork. The Firewise Committee works together to write a Wildfire Risk Assessment, which will be the committee's primary tool to determine the risk reduction priorities and activities for your community. This is the initial step to becoming a nationally recognized Firewise USA community. The community risk assessment is intended to document the overall general neighborhood conditions that are visible from common areas and does not need to provide details on each individual building. Firewise provides an easy-to-follow template for the assessment process. The SCFSC County Coordinator can help complete any sections of the assessment if your committee needs assistance.

To complete the assessment, you'll go on a field trip with your Firewise Committee and neighbors. Experts from agencies like the Shasta County Fire Safe Council and local fire agencies can attend if needed to help you identify risks and vulnerabilities of your community. The risk assessment should focus on how vulnerable the homes are to flying embers and different types of fires. It should also document the types of houses and how close they are, the plants and trees and how close they are, and the structure of the landscape.

#### **Action Items:**

- Fill out the Risk Assessment Form: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Project/Storefront/Catalog/Files/Firewise/Get-started/FirewiseCommAssess.pdf>

### **Step 4**

Step 4 focuses on setting priorities. Your board or committee will create a 3-Year Action Plan that lists and ranks the most important steps the community can take to lower the risk of wildfire damage. This plan will include projects like building firebreaks or improving evacuation routes, as well as suggested actions for homeowners such as clearing vegetation near homes, and educational activities. The list will highlight the actions that community members aim to finish each year or within 3 years. Communities in California are required to use The California-Specific 3-Year Action Plan form. If your 3-Year Plan is not on this template, your application will not be accepted. The Action Plan is required to be updated at least every three years or if circumstances change such as completing activities, experiencing a fire or a natural disaster, or new construction in community.

#### **Action Items:**

- Complete the 3-Year Action Plan using the California Template: [https://readyforwildfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/California\\_3Year\\_Action\\_Plan\\_Template.docx](https://readyforwildfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/California_3Year_Action_Plan_Template.docx)

## Step 5

Step 5 focuses on community works. The Firewise program is designed to provide education to help property owners do their own home hardening and defensible space. Community members will also team up to work on projects that benefit everyone in the neighborhood, so now is the time to start working on your planned Wildfire Risk Reduction tasks, such as brush clearing, adding gutter guards, or educating others. When community members volunteer their time, these hours are recorded as Investment Hours for your Firewise application. Each community is required to invest 1 volunteer hour per house per year. For example, if your community has 50 homes, then 50 hours of work must be logged and reported each year. When you apply for Firewise recognition, you will need to report one year's worth of Investment Hours. However, you don't have to wait a whole year to apply; you just need to have worked the number of required hours you will need per year. Although high community involvement will help create a more defensible neighborhood, it can be difficult to get every household to participate. As long as you collect the correct number of hours per year, it doesn't matter which households they come from.

*\*NFPA and CAL FIRE like to see a balance of money invested and volunteer hours.*

## Action Items

- Become familiar with the Volunteer Hourly Worksheet and the Firewise Time Expense Investment Examples
- Create a Log of Investment Hours. Investment Hours are hours worked by community members or money spent (\$33.49 = 1 hour). You can use the Firewise Worksheet or choose to make your own.

## [Firewise Reporting Template](#)

Once you open the template, click the "Duplicate" button at the top to save a copy.

It is helpful to change the name to your Firewise community.

You can get a link to send the form to your community members by clicking the three dots in the upper right corner. Then click "Collaborate or Duplicate," and then click "Get a link to duplicate."

## [Firewise-Volunteer-and-Vegetation-Removal-WorksheetDownload](#)

## [Firewise Time Expense Investment ExamplesDownload](#)

## **Step 6**

It's time to apply. The Committee applies for Firewise recognition by creating an account in the Firewise Portal. Follow the nine steps of the application process, which includes uploading your Community Risk Assessment, the map of your community's boundaries, your 3-Year Action Plan, and log of Investment Hours. Once all required fields are completed, you will submit your application via the portal and your Firewise state liaison will review your application. If you need help navigating your portal contact the SCFSC County Coordinator for assistance.

### **Action Items:**

- Create a Firewise account at: <https://portal.firewise.org/user/login>
- Gather your documents and map and follow the Application Instructions in the Portal.

## **Step 7**

Your Firewise state liaison will notify your Lead Contact Person when your application has been approved or denied. If your application is approved, you are officially a recognized Firewise Community. If your application is denied, your state liaison will explain the issues with your application and how to correct them. Once these issues have been resolved, you can resubmit your application.

### **Action Items:**

- Contact [firewise@shastafiresafe.org](mailto:firewise@shastafiresafe.org) for assistance correcting the issues that are needed to reapply.

## **Step 8**

If approved, congratulations on becoming an officially recognized Firewise site! In order to remain "In Good Standing" in the program, participating sites will need to complete an annual renewal application. This application is due no later than mid-November. Consider working on renewal application starting the first week of November.

### **Requirements for Renewal Include:**

- Wildfire Risk Reduction Educational Outreach Event or Activity Per Year
- Log Vegetation Removal Efforts in Portal
- Log Expense Tracking in Portal
- If Needed, Update Your Risk Assessment or Action Plan

We encourage you to get familiar with using the portal, and [reach out to us](#) with any questions!