



Firewise® Communities

“The How-To Newsletter”

10 Years of Firewise
Communities/USA®

This quarterly provides articles and helpful hints on how to incorporate Firewise principles.

THE FIREWISE® COMMUNITY— THE ROAD AHEAD

While it's nice to celebrate accomplishments, it's also important to look ahead and establish goals for new achievements worthy of further celebration. The year 2011 marked a significant milestone for Firewise – 10 years of bringing Firewise practices to communities at risk from wildfire and supporting those communities in their efforts to better protect their residents and property. Now, as the main advocacy arm of NFPA's recently introduced Wildland Fire Operations Division, Firewise seeks to make a greater impact in wildfire safety throughout the U.S. through 2013.

Introduced within the past year, our division's central mission is to protect people and property in communities at risk from wildfire. In that regard, our staff wants you to know you can rely on NFPA's programs to provide the most up-to-date and useful information on wildfire safety recommendations and research.

To fulfill our mission we've developed a three-year action plan focused on three key areas: codes and standards, advocacy and coalition building, and communication and information. We aim to augment our outreach by increasing participation among new communities in the Firewise Communities/USA® recognition program and by retaining a large percentage of already-participating communities.

Toward achieving our goal, we're introducing a redesigned web site this month, and will host our fourth Backyards and Beyond Wildland Fire Education Conference this fall, along with multiple offerings of a new two-day seminar, "Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone" (see Firewise Resources, page 15, for additional information).

Additionally, we've hired six regional Firewise advisors who will serve as resources to state forestry organizations, fire departments, and

communities in wildfire-prone areas (see the introduction to them later in this issue). We also are systematically reaching out to audiences that influence our primary target of WUI homeowners, including youth, building/development/planning and associated professionals, and policymakers.

As we have from the inception of Firewise Communities/USA, we offer the latest information about research on the effectiveness of WUI building codes, landscape ordinances, and other regulations, to ensure that your community members can be well informed about relevant issues that can affect the safety of their homes and property. We also seek to engage small rural and volunteer fire departments in Firewise and related wildfire safety initiatives, since they often are the frontline in dealing with wildfire when it strikes a community and are an excellent resource for the communities they serve.

As we scan the road ahead, we have set additional goals to carry us through 2013. Among these is the aim to have 1,000 communities throughout the nation achieving Firewise recognition status. If your community is among the 700 current Firewise communities, you can serve as ambassadors, helping to steer neighboring communities toward learning the benefits of Firewise practices.

And if you are a new community considering the possibilities that Firewise can offer your residents, read this newsletter, visit our redesigned Website, register for the Backyards and Beyond conference and attend a Home Ignition Zone seminar. They will offer a road map of sorts that will lead you to resources for protecting your community from wildfire. And you'll be able to join us on the road forward, when 1,000 or more communities understand their relationship to the wildland/urban interface and wildfire – and most importantly, how to protect themselves from wildfire risk.

Summer 2011



THE FIREWISE® COMMUNITY — EXAMPLE

WEDGEFIELD, FLORIDA – HOME TO THE FIRST FIREWISE/FLASH MODEL HOME

Wedgefield is located approximately 23 miles east of downtown Orlando. It encompasses more than 6,000 acres of planned quarter-acre and one- to five-acre home sites. Surrounded by woods, this area has a history of periodic wildfires typical of Florida's pine flat woods. Its neighbors to the west and north include the St. John's River Water Management District, Orange County and State of Florida, and to the south and east there is Deseret Ranch.

During the fires of 1998 (which were running along and across I-95), a fire started on the north side of Wedgefield, crossed over SR 520 and went east, then turned and came back to Wedgefield. Several of the streets on the east side were evacuated and many more residents prepared to leave. "When the Firewise® program was introduced to the community, it seemed we could learn to be better prepared for the next fire, since it is always a matter of when the next one will happen – not IF it will happen," says Mary Prescott, chair of the Wedgefield community.

wise community in 2001), when a new assessment was done, the overall average was 87 – with 1,350 homes and 120 under construction.

The community's main focus is educating residents on how to make their homes/property Firewise by reducing fuel, using Firewise plants in the 30 feet of defensible space, preparing for when a wildfire occurs, informing why controlled burns are good in and around the community and preparing for evacuation in cases when it is needed.

"We have been able to create some firebreaks in the community on easements that can stop or slow down a fire," notes Prescott "We conduct two or three workshops each year for



Aerial photos of the Wedgefield fire. Notice the defensible space around the home.

the residents and we sponsor a minimum of two community events, one of which is a landscaping expo with vendors selling Firewise plants and providing education in a fun setting. We also piggyback on any event that is in the community by having a table so we can pass out literature and talk to residents. There is an annual car show we take part in, as it offers a fun setting for educating people and attracts a different audience for us to reach."

Every month, the group also provides an article for the HOA newsletter as well, and some of the team members have traveled to other communities to speak with and encourage them to consider adopting the Firewise program.

"Wedgefield accomplishes the original Firewise principles

In April 2001, an assessment of Wedgefield was conducted, with involvement from the Florida Division of Forestry, Orange County Fire Rescue Department, Division of Emergency Management and local homeowners forming a Firewise Risk Assessment Team. At that time, about 1,100 homes had been completed, with 30 more in various states of construction. The remaining lots – more than 80 percent – were undeveloped, with many belonging to people living out of state. This assessment indicated that the overall subdivision average was 73, which rates near the bottom of the high-hazard category (70-112). The average for homes sites was 69 and for undeveloped lots was 76. By November 2002, (Wedgefield became a Fire-

without funding or leadership from agencies,” says Prescott. “Our funding comes from donations and, though we operate as a partnership, our residents have taken charge of putting the principles into action.”

The community is proud to partner with the Orange County Fire Rescue Department, Florida Division of Forestry, Orange County Parks and Recreation, Orange County Extension Service, St. John’s River Water Management District, Ranger Drainage District, Orange County Environmental Protection Division, Wedgefield Home Owners Association and Florida Division of Emergency Management.

“These partnerships allow us to work together for the betterment of our community,” says Prescott. “Our partners are very supportive allowing us to direct the course of action we want



Mary Prescott receives award for Wedgefield’s efforts.

to take, participating in the workshops and events that we sponsor.”

For its efforts, Wedgefield has been recognized by FLASH (Federal Alliance for Safe Homes) and Orange County. In addition, members of the community have been presenters at the Firewise conference “Backyards and Beyond”. (see page 13 for conference information.)

How-To Newsletter thanks Mary Prescott, chair of the Wedgefield community for the information and photographs for this Community Example.

America's first model home built with Firewise and FLASH features. Photos below shows the home during construction and the second the finished product.

This model home served to demonstrate the design, materials and techniques that can reduce the risk of damage or loss caused by wind, water or wildfire plus demonstrating that a house can be made significantly more disaster resistant without significantly increasing the cost.

Likewise, the model home shows that Firewise and FLASH recommendations are compatible with a homeowner's other values for appearance, security, energy efficiency, etc. The Firewise/FLASH model was the result of a partnership between Wedgefield Firewise and Magnolia Construction & Development Company.

The Firewise program is designed to increase survivability of homes and communities during wildfire events while the FLASH program focuses on protection from wind and water damage.



THE FIREWISE® COMMUNITY — EXAMPLE

SUNDANCE, UTAH – SUSCEPTIBILITY TO WILDFIRE PILOTS PARTICIPATION

The Sundance community is located in the North Fork of Provo Canyon, an unincorporated resort community with 275 residential homes. The Utah Division of Forestry Fire & State Lands has classified the Sundance area a wildfire “at risk” community. Wildfire interface awareness has always been high among community residents and, in 1998, a community fire forum was held to discuss wildfire, outline community goals, and develop a fire plan. Additionally, to improve the fire readiness of the Sundance Community, the local fire/water district formed the North Fork Fire Advisory Council was formed, which adopted a plan in 1999 with the following goals:

- Prevent unwanted fire damage
- Provide adequate fire fighting and public safety service
- Disseminate information on wildfire awareness and creating a fire-safe community

To accomplish these goals, the council worked with homeowner associations, along with local, state, and federal fire and safety advisors.

In 2001, several large wildfires (Wasatch Complex) burned in three canyons adjacent to the Sundance community. The North Fork Fire Advisory Council was in its early stages of planning to become a Firewise community and the assessments and information already gathered was of great benefit during the fires. The fires brought to urgent light the community’s susceptibility to wildfire and were a catalyst for the community moving quickly forward with Firewise recognition. That same year, the council met with Firewise program representatives and worked with them to develop a community assessment and fire management approach plan.

Among the early challenges for the Sundance community involved educating its members about vegetation clearances. Homeowners initially had a misconception about what was fire-safe and felt that they would be asked to “clear-cut” their properties. Once informational materials were distributed and several sample properties treated many homeowners were encouraged by the Firewise approach.

The biggest and continuing challenge is keeping the community motivated and volunteer council members en-



Community Evacuation Route Fuel Reduction Project (after)

gaged. “We have found that the council has worked best when driven by volunteer homeowners as opposed to by fire professionals,” notes Kenny Johnson, of the North Fork Fire Department that services Sundance. “It seems that community members are more likely to participate in Firewise activities when their neighbors are helping to develop ideas and leading the projects. While public safety advisors play an important support role in project implementation, the more they are relied upon, the less the volunteers feel that there is a need for them to participate.”

He adds, “The more the volunteers take ownership of the projects, the more reward they get upon the project completion – which seems to lead to continued participation. All in all, the biggest reward is knowing that the community is better prepared and safer in the event of a wildfire. Working with the volunteers that want to make their community safer has been very inspiring.”

In its 10 years participating as a Firewise community, Sundance has had many successes. Among its accomplishments have been an annual wildfire tabletop and community clean-up/chipping day; posting of all residential



Community Evacuation Route Fuel Reduction Project (before)

addresses with updated maps distributed to emergency responders annually; the installation of sirens and automated dialing systems for notifying the community of wildfire; and clearing and improvements made to roads along evacuation routes.

“One of the most interesting projects that we have worked on was a community fuel break at the Sundance Resort,” recalls Johnson. “Because of the sensitive nature of the forest and steepness of the slopes, we could not use heavy machinery to thin the fuel break. So, to accomplish the fuel break goal, we worked with the State of Utah to secure grant funding that provided low impact thinning projects, which included helicopter- and horse-pulled logging operations and pile burning. The break turned out great and the forest is healthy again.”

He adds, “The Firewise program brought focus to our preparedness activities and gave us the tools that we needed to educate property owners and to develop our community wildfire plan. We are proud to be a Firewise recognized community and have encouraged other Utah ‘at-risk communities’ to look into Firewise.”

How-To Newsletter thanks Kenny Johnson, of the North Fork Fire Department in Sundance, Utah, for providing the information and photographs for this Community Example.



Horses and a helicopter were used to create fuel breaks.



Residents hold a Firewise Chipper Day.

How-To Chats with Tiana Allen and LisaMarie Sinatra



In this issue of How-To Newsletter, Tiana Allen and LisaMarie Sinatra team up to discuss how communications, including the Firewise Quick Response Unit (QRU), help to get the word out about Firewise practices, promoting the expansion of Firewise practices to communities throughout the United States.

Tiana is senior account executive at Ogilvy Public Relations' Washington, D.C. office, where she leads media relations for the NFPA's Firewise Communities Program and coordinates the Firewise Quick Response Unit.



LisaMarie is associate project manager of communications for the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Her experience includes public affairs work in higher education and for major medical institutions in Boston and New York. LisaMarie recently received her master's degree from Boston University's College of Communication.

H-T: *What is the concept behind the "Quick Response Unit," or QRU, for Firewise communication?*

TA: : The Quick Response Unit (QRU) is Firewise's vehicle for reaching national and local media with Firewise messaging. Our goal is to be prepared to help the media balance their wildfire reporting by providing real steps for residents and communities to take toward reducing their wildfire risk. We work with state forestry partners to provide examples that demonstrate the effectiveness of Firewise principles in reducing wildfire damage. The QRU also is helpful to educate reporters about the impact of wildfire and the benefit of Firewise to community and individual planning, resulting from their expanded coverage beyond active wildfires.

H-T: *Has Firewise been successful at getting messages out during wildland/urban interface (WUI) fire events?*

TA: Yes, Firewise has worked with state forestry partners to include Firewise messages in their local media outreach. Through our coordinated efforts, we've seen media coverage of Firewise increase in Florida, Texas and North Carolina.

H-T: *What kind of response have these Firewise stories gotten?*

TA: Last summer, the news coverage that QRU garnered in Michigan following the Meridian Fire led to the recognition of the first Firewise Communities/USA site in the Wolverine State. This is the type of response the QRU was developed to create: Hopefully, individuals see examples of Firewise principles in action and are inspired to seek similar solutions for their own property ready to assist where needed. With the introduction of the Firewise Advisors, we are particularly excited about being able to provide our state liaisons with another pair of hands.

H-T: *What are the most important things NFPA wants to communicate about Firewise?*

LMS: The Firewise Communities Program is the "go to" source for information about the WUI, wildland fire mitigation and loss prevention. As the only national program of its kind that supports communities, homeowners, associations, and state and local organizations, its principles are backed by prudent research and statistics developed by leading, trusted experts in the field.

In an effort to elevate its role in the wildland fire world, in 2010,

NFPA created a new Wildland Fire Operations Division, and the Firewise Communities Program is an element of that. In addition, NFPA hired a division director and expanded staffing. The division has developed a mission and action plan around wildland fire that reinforces NFPA's position as the authority on fire and related issues, providing more resources for working on projects that can help prevent the loss of lives and property during brush, grass and forest fires. With 700 recognized communities in 40 states, to date, the Firewise message reaches all corners of the country, and continues to make a difference.

H-T: *What audiences are you trying to reach?*

LMS: Our main audiences are homeowners, civic leaders, firefighters and educators. As a result of our newly created strategic plan, the program is expanding its reach to include youth, planners, developers and landscape architects.

H-T: *What methods are the NFPA using to communicate? Are some of these more successful than others?*

LMS: NFPA is really good about keeping up to date with the latest communications technology. From our social media platforms to a special "app" we've developed for our annual Conference and Expo in June, we continually research new and improved ways to reach our audiences.

With regard to NFPA's Firewise Communities Program, our Website is an important tool for people to learn more about us. We are launching a redesigned site this month that offers improved navigation capabilities and lots of great new resources including information about grants, regulations and plans, all of which are topics that many people ask us about. In the coming months, NFPA itself will engage in an overhaul of its current site, with a launch expected in early 2012.

NFPA also has been involved in a great deal of social media activity, which grows stronger daily. There are currently seven active blogs on the Website, including the Firewise blog, which generates a great deal of discussion activity and prompts interesting debates between our followers and our staff.

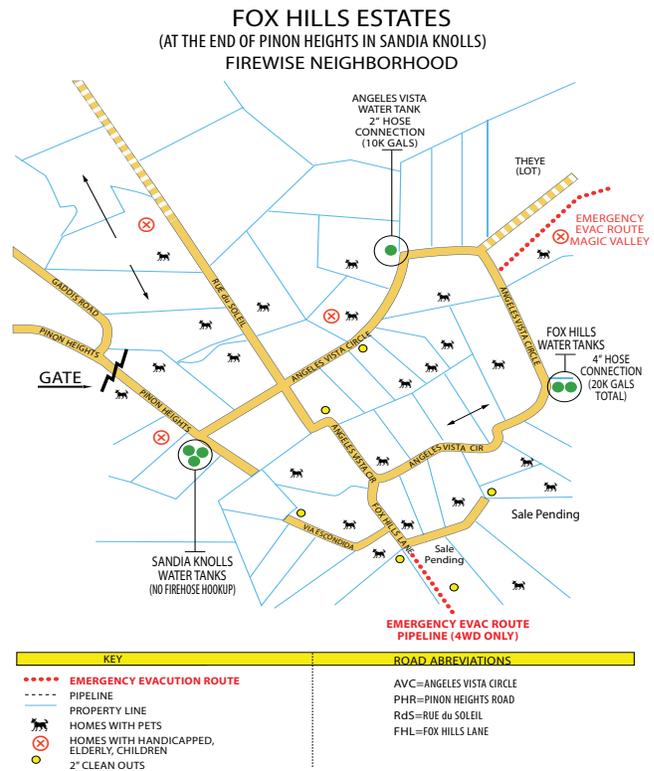
Of note, Firewise Communities has recently created a new subgroup on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) called Wildland Fire Management/Firewise, which is a subgroup of the NFPA main

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Around the Firewise® Home — EVACUATION PREPAREDNESS

Mapping A Way Out for Evacuation

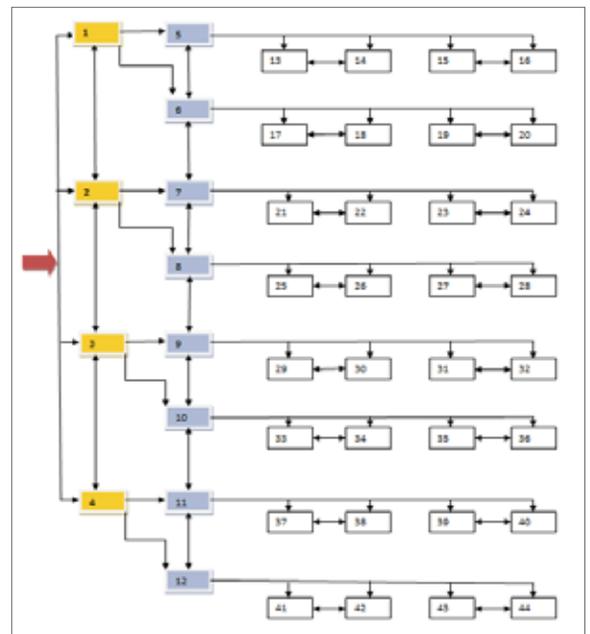
This map, developed by a Fox Hills resident who also is a graphics designer, shows the lots, owners, pets, shared well water storage tanks with connectors for fire department, six water hydrants (two-inch standpipes for which the fire department has adapters) and two emergency exits leading to neighboring communities to the east, in case our normal entrance to the west is blocked. The fire department comes out once or twice a year to check the water connections and the emergency exits. One exit was graded by a resident, who cleared trees and filled in gullies on his own property to make it usable by two-wheel drive vehicles and the large fire truck. The second exit is on a hillside and is usable only by four-wheel drive vehicles and drivers who know where to go. Like many mountain communities (we are at 7,200 feet), there is only one entrance/exit for normal use. Our neighboring community to the west has the same problem, so we have offered our exit as a way out, if necessary. Signs and arrows from our gate (private gated community) to the emergency exit have been provided and the officers of their community homeowner's association are familiar with the exit and have copies of our map. The map for residents showing our gate code is updated annually. A second version with a permanent gate code is provided to local fire and police departments. In case of an emergency, the gate would be locked open.



Phone Tree — First Line of Evacuation Readiness

The phone tree offers a flexible format that can easily be expanded into more cells. The idea was to start with key contacts who are active in the community and are usually home (retired or work from home). Anyone can start the process by calling one or more of these contacts (identified in the yellow boxes). Those four individuals then determine whether to start the entire phone tree.

In any case, 9-1-1 would be called immediately while one or more of the four frontline individuals, along with whoever discovered the problem (smoke, fire, etc.), would investigate to see if it is severe enough to initiate warning calls to every resident. The phone tree is designed so that everyone receives calls from two people and no one has to call more than four people. If someone does not answer, the person calling then calls the numbers that the person who did not answer is responsible for calling. In most cases, the people in each cell also are neighbors, so they are in a better position to help someone who needs assistance or help with pets if the neighbor is not home.



Phone Tree depicting community hierarchy to notify residents in case of an emergency.

So far, we have not had to use the phone tree, though we did have a close call two years ago, when a house fire in the adjoining development burned that house to the ground. If we had experienced high winds that night, we would have had to prepare for evacuation quickly. As an additional precaution, following the snow season, our snow-plow pickup is fitted with a water tank and 300-foot hose reels, as well as connectors to our two-inch hy-

drants. That allows us to handle any small, smoldering grass fire that might develop before the fire department arrives, reducing the need to prepare for evacuation.

How-To Newsletter thanks Erik Aspelin for providing information regarding his community's creation of a subdivision map and phone tree system to aid evacuation and emergency response.

How-To Chat With Tiana Allen and LisaMarie Sinatra

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group. (To be a member, you must first be a member of the NFPA group and then “ask” to join our subgroup.) With close to 10,000 members in the NFPA group, we are able to reach people with targeted messages and event notices in a few keystrokes.

Firewise also has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/firewise) and Twitter handle (www.twitter.com/firewise). Our NFPA's Firewise Communities Program on Facebook has more than 400 members, and more than 1,000 people follow us on Twitter. All of the blogs, posts and tweets are connected to each other and to our Web sites, which guarantees cross-promotion and increased activity between sites.

In addition, Firewise Communities enlists the help of the public relations firm, Ogilvy Public Relations, whose professionals help with media outreach including press releases, op-eds, story pitches and radio, television and print interviews. Of course, whenever possible, our own staff participate in panel discussions and workshops at conferences, which is a great way to keep both NFPA and Firewise Communities “top of mind.”

Using each of these communications vehicles, we've been able to link our efforts together, resulting in increased exposure over many different platforms. Whatever vehicle we choose to use for a given project or event, NFPA and Firewise Communities work hard to ensure we distribute information to our audiences quickly and accurately.

Molly on the Move — Making the Rounds

During February, NFPA's Molly Mowery joined the association's Southwest Regional Manager Ray Bizal on a visit to Utah. While there, they stopped in Salt Lake City, Park City, Emigration Canyon and Sundance (see Sundance story on page 4).

The visit included an information exchange with Utah's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff and other individuals involved with public information and outreach. In addition, NFPA staff provided Firewise program and Wildland Fire Operations Division updates, while learning more about Utah's local wildfire mitigation initiatives. Molly and Ray also held Firewise presentations in Salt Lake City, Park City, and Sandy, where audience members included DNR staff, state and local fire officials, local developers, engineers, land use planners, and public educators. They heard a number of positive suggestions to increase the use of Firewise principles in local development and increase the program's visibility.

During the visit, NFPA and Utah DNR staff met with homeowner and Firewise community leader Kathy Christensen at her home in Emigration Canyon, where she discussed her Firewise community efforts and highlighted the community's unique goat mitigation program. The group also toured the Sundance Firewise community. Both Sundance and Emigration Canyon are original Firewise communities, active since the beginning of the program.

Among the topics of discussion was challenges in Utah related to wildfire mitigation. Molly and Ray learned that:

- Utah has developed a very localized and sophisticated outreach program for wildland fire. Many community efforts also have been tied to the pursuit of funding opportunities, resulting in a large number of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). There is a potential to link the CWPPs with the Firewise Communities/USA program to further support local mitigation efforts. To achieve this, it may be helpful to convey examples of how the Firewise program has resulted in instances of receiving grant monies or similar outcomes.
- Utah has a very high wildfire risk. Of added concern is recent changes to legislation that allow for an expanded length of sale and use of fireworks this summer, which could increase wildfire activity, depending on other conditions.



Around the Firewise® Home —

COMPLEMENTING FIREWISE PRACTICES WITH “READY, SET, GO!”

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) first presented the “Ready Set Go!” Program in 2009. This public education program is vital to those individuals living in the wildland urban interface as it strives to teach residents how to prepare to get ready well in advance of a wildfire, get set to implement their disaster plan, and finally, to go early. The program, which is slated for nationwide rollout in 2012, stresses the importance of personal responsibility involved in each step. What’s more, the objectives of “Ready, Set, Go!” go hand in hand with Firewise Communities/USA® objectives and can be considered an extension of and complement to the Firewise Communities/USA program.

During 2009, the Barnegat Township Volunteer Fire Company #1, located in Ocean County, New Jersey, was selected as one of the original eight fire companies to pilot “Ready, Set, Go!” One of the reasons for its selection was the community’s close proximity to the Pinelands National Reserve.



The Pinelands was established in 1978 and recognized as a U.S. Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1983. Made up mainly of pitch pine and scrub oak forest, the Pinelands encompass 1.1 million acres, or 22 percent of New Jersey. The forest depends upon fire for its survival, since fire enables the pitch pines to release seeds from their cones and allows the seedlings to sprout by preventing woody undergrowth.

On May 15, 2007, the Warren Grove Gunnery Range Fire, which consumed more than 17,000 acres, was a wake-up call to communities adjacent to the Pinelands. This fire influenced Horizons at Barnegat’s journey to become a rec-

ognized Firewise Communities/USA site in 2008. The Horizons is an “over-55” community comprised of 164 homes, situated on 99.9 acres, with approximately 300 residents.

The Barnegat Fire Company #1 has been one of the community’s team players from the very beginning, offering support and expertise to residents. It was therefore logical to work with the fire company by embracing “Ready, Set, Go!” and bringing its message to the Horizons community.

John Cowie, president of the fire company, felt that a personal one-on-one approach would be the best way to introduce the program. Following the distribution of a flyer to each home, one November Sunday, the company’s fire fighters went door-to-door to explain the program and answer residents’ questions. They also left a brochure at each home explaining the program for homeowners to review.



This year, the community’s Firewise Committee coordinated its annual Firewise open house with the fire company and other community and state partners, highlighting “Ready, Set, Go!” as the evening’s theme. Residents had the opportunity to visit display tables, pick up information, and speak with presenters, committee members and fellow residents in a relaxed atmosphere. The Horizons at Barnegat Emergency Management Committee, partnered with the community committee, providing a grab-and-go kit display. Since the two committees share common goals, it is a valuable partnership within the community; they have previously collaborated to prepare an emergency manual for residents. Their next joint activity will be a mock evacuation drill, planned for the fall, in conjunction with the Barnegat Police Department.

Through guest speakers, community members learned about the new reverse 9-1-1 system that will soon be implemented in the township to alert residents and provide

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Ready, Set, Go (Continued from page 9)

instructions regarding evacuation procedures; about the fire company's involvement with "Ready, Set, Go!" as well as the benefits of defensible space and the need to prepare one's home in advance of a wildfire; about controlled burns conducted by the Forest Fire Service to control vegetation; and about the forestry work completed in the community this year, including before and after images of the work completed in some common areas bordering forested areas. The presentations concluded with a review of the basic principles of "Ready, Set, Go!"

The open house offered residents the opportunity to meet and communicate with the community and state partners, collaborate in mutual efforts to mitigate wildfire, and acquire important, useful information. Such team building and pooling of available talents and resources, has made

Horizons at Barnegat better ready to deal with future wildfires. The collaboration, coordination, and communication with its various partners also serve to strengthen and enhance each participant's goals and objectives. "Ready, Set, Go!" is a comprehensive plan that requires all partners to work together with one ultimate goal in mind — protecting people and property in the WUI from wildfire.

How-To Newsletter thanks Nancy Reid, committee chair for Horizons at Barnegat Firewise, for contributing the information and images for this overview about "Ready, Set, Go!" in her New Jersey community for this Firewise Around the Home feature.



Lt. Germaine, Barnegat Police Department speaks to residents during Firewise Open House.



Before and after of common area fuel break and forestry mower removing vegetation.



Around the Firewise® Home —

FIREWISE HOME SAVE DOCUMENTED

Firewise Saves a Colorado Home

Ever wonder whether Firewise principles work? Ed Brown and Val Hall, who live west of Fort Collins, Colorado, found their answer in April.

Ed Brown and his wife Val Hall witnessed the Crystal Mountain wildfire burn down the mountainside. On the night of April 2, 2011, Ed and Val watched a 9:00 pm news report that the fire was 70 percent contained—enough comfort for Ed to go to bed for the night. He was awakened by Val an hour later by her beckons to their front door.

“We saw the big, orange glow and immediately called three near-by neighbors to evacuate,” says Ed.

Brown and Hall left their home with their son Andrew and family friend Ron at 11:15 pm to head a friend’s house two miles away as fire balls blew by their car in the 80 mile per hour wind gusts.

“The drive was intense but we didn’t see the brunt until we got to our friends’ house. That’s when we saw the horrendous orange glow on that mountain,” said Brown.

Brown and Hall could hear structures burning not far from their friend’s home. While much couldn’t be seen through the black smoke tinged orange by the wildfire, the sound of exploding propane tanks was unmistakable.

They returned home on Sunday morning. Their home was the only one that had been threatened and withstood the fire. The destroyed houses that were now blackened rubble had been a variety of log homes or cedar sided with asphalt shingles.

A photo of Brown and Hall’s home two days after the fire has a distinctive characteristic obvious from even a great distance. A gleaming blue metal roof sits atop their wood home surrounded by a ring of defensible space and a few trees.

“We have been Firewise for years,” says Hall, “ever since building next to Roosevelt National Forest. We have a metal roof, tree branches trimmed up to 20’ off the ground and an area around the house that has been grazed by goats. It saved our home along with a bit of luck.”

Brown and Hall have followed Firewise principles independently since 1997. Hall subscribes to the How-To Newsletter. She and Brown adapt the guidance given in their personal wildfire safety plan for their property.

How-To Newsletter thanks Ed Brown and Val Hall for sharing their story and photos, and Tiana Allen of Ogilvy PR for writing it up.



FIREWISE® BY THE NUMBERS

Ten years ago, a dozen pilot communities helped launch Firewise Communities/USA®. Since then, Firewise has grown to 700 sites in 40 states! Since our Spring issue of "How-To," 25 new communities achieved Firewise recognition status.

Whether your community is new or an "old-timer," being Firewise means greater awareness and safety for your home and community. The more Firewise Communities/USA sites there are, the more of you there are who will be preparing to prevent fire from damaging your homes and property.

Congratulations to all of our Firewise communities for making awareness of wildfire and the safety of your communities a top priority!

How-To Newsletter is pleased to welcome the following communities that have achieved 2010 Firewise Communities/USA® recognition since our last issue:

Arkansas – Alpine, Clarkridge

Florida – Prairie Creek Park, River Ranch Resorts

Idaho – Kellogg, Kingston on Finlay Loop, Price-Jerome, Villard Addition

Oklahoma – Broken Bow, Canute, Elk City, Falconhead

Oregon – Oak Knoll Meadows, Pioneer Village

Virginia – Cedar Key, Saddlebrook Farms Subdivision, Windy Gap Mountain Village

Washington – Byron Road, Hillview Terrace 1, Ponderosa Park - Ferry County, Robin Hood Loop, Ryderwood, San Juan Drive, Sugarloaf Mountain, Tuttle Ranch

If your community is interested in Firewise Communities/USA recognition status, additional information on the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program may be found at www.Firewise.org. And remember, you can contact your state forest service liaison for assistance; he or she is an excellent resource for guidance in formulating your plan and offering activities that can energize your community to take part. The Firewise Web site includes this contact information as well.

Do you know of a state, region or community whose efforts deserve special recognition? Write Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org and share your story.

Firewise State of Mind

The Preserve at Sharp Mountain, Georgia offers the following "Firewise State of Mind" observations, highlighting ways in which Firewise can enrich your community:

- A Firewise Day brings neighbors together in a friendly work atmosphere to achieve a worthy goal
- A lunch or dinner ends the workday in a festive atmosphere
- Fuel mitigation along roads not only widens a firebreak, it enhances road safety by opening up line-of-site at curves and intersections



How-To Newsletter thanks Robert M. Winston, of the Firewise Communities/USA Committee of the Preserve at Sharp Mountain for the contribution.

How-To Newsletter would like to chronicle how or why Firewise is making a difference in your community. In 50 words or less, describe ways in which Firewise practices have served your community well, what you like best about Firewise, or a tip you think could be helpful to other Firewise communities. Each issue, we'll select up to two "Firewise State of Mind" items to share with How-To readers. Submit your entry to Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org, or via MyFirewise.

The Value of Volunteers: What's Their Time Worth?

The success of your Firewise Communities/USA® efforts can be measured in many ways – stories by the media, cubic yards of green waste removed, or number of people attending Firewise events. To qualify as a recognized community, the national program requires you to document your investment in these Firewise efforts by tracking expenses, grants received, and, in particular, time spent by volunteers in making your community safer from wildfire. Each year, communities must show that they have invested at least \$2 per resident to qualify for recognition and to maintain their status.

A commonly asked question from communities embarking on achieving Firewise status is: “How do we put a dollar value on the volunteer efforts of our neighbors or our Firewise Board? That’s where the Website Independent Sector (www.independentsector.org) can help. This group researches and tracks the value of volunteer time by analyzing U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics information. The group’s numbers are based on the average hourly earnings of all production and non-supervisory workers on private non-farm payrolls.

Independent Sector takes these figures and increases them by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits and announces these figures each spring. The estimated dollar value of volunteer time for 2010 is \$21.36 per hour (up from \$20.85 per hour in 2009).

Once you determine what your volunteer hours are worth, you can use this information to track investment for different activities. For example, for a Firewise Day, keep a count of how many people are volunteering and for how many hours during that event. The time spent by volunteers to organize, set up, and clean up later also counts. If you have residents who have agreed to do work on their own property at a certain period, you can ask them to estimate their hours and may also count that time for each person doing the work.

You’ll be surprised at how quickly the volunteer efforts add up. For example, 20 volunteers putting in just 2 ½ hours of their time each year represents nearly \$1,000 of investment in Firewise work – almost enough to meet the minimum investment for a community of 500 residents. Forms to help you track volunteer time and services are available on the Firewise Communities/USA web page at www.firewise.org/usa.



For more about volunteer hours and how they are calculated and used, visit: www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.

Editor's Note: If you are proud of your community's efforts or think you have a unique activity that could benefit other Firewise communities, please share the information with *How-To Newsletter* by submitting a description of your activity and how it has helped with wildfire mitigation in your community to Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org.

THE FIREWISE® LEADER

More Firewise Assistance! Introducing the Firewise Advisors

NFPA's Firewise® Communities program has contracted with six outstanding individuals to serve as Regional Firewise Advisors. These folks will serve as resources to state forestry organizations, fire departments, and communities in wildfire-prone areas by providing Firewise training and materials; supporting the start-up of new Firewise Communities/USA® recognition sites; and supporting the ongoing participation of existing sites. Each Firewise Advisor supports the NFPA Firewise Communities Program by representing the national program and collecting important findings and information for program leaders.

Meet the Firewise Advisors

Central – Todd Chlanda (tschlanda@netzero.net)
(Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin)

Most recently an assistant fire chief with the Redings Mill Fire District in southwest Missouri, Todd Chlanda assisted the first 10 communities in the state to become recognized Firewise Communities/USA sites. He also has served as a fire protection specialist with the Southwest Missouri Resource Conservation & Development Council.

Northeast – Heidi Wagner (heidewagner51@gmail.com)
(Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia)

An experienced wildland firefighter and former member of her local volunteer fire company in upstate New York, Heidi Wagner also is the manager of Sam's Point Preserve and an employee of The Nature Conservancy. She successfully guided the hamlet of Cragsmoor to enroll as the first Firewise Communities/USA site in New York.

Northwest – Gary Marshall (marshal.nw@gmail.com)
(Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Washington and Wyoming)

Gary Marshall is a deputy fire chief in Bend, Oregon and an outspoken advocate of Firewise in the fire service community. He has partnered with residents and local governments to support the Deschutes County "Project Wildfire" and "FireFree" programs. He also is an NFPA instructor for the *Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone* seminar.

South – Patrick Mahoney (patrickmmahoney@yahoo.com)
(Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee)

During his tenure as a wildfire mitigation specialist in southwest Florida, Patrick Mahoney has helped dozens of small neighborhoods, many made up of active retiree residents, achieve Firewise recognition. A two-time "Firewise Leadership Award" winner, he also serves as a public information officer on fire incidents large and small.

Southwest 1 – Faith Berry (bearlady43@yahoo.com)
(Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada)

Over the past several years, Faith Berry has helped form 30 small Fire Safe Councils in San Diego County, where she integrated Firewise materials and concepts. She brings a range of experience to the Firewise position, from firefighting to park management to writing and grant writing.

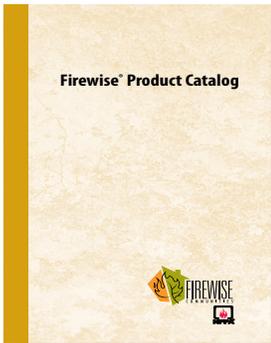
Southwest 2 – Keith Worley (forestredev@aol.com)
(Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas and Utah)

A resident and "sparkplug" in one of the first Firewise Communities/USA sites in the nation, Keith Worley, of Colorado, is an experienced Firewise leader as well as a professional forester and certified arborist. Keith is well known for his creative hands-on training courses and compelling Firewise presentations.



THE FIREWISE® RESOURCES

Be Resourceful When Planning Your Firewise® Day



With the arrival of spring each year, Firewise communities throughout the nation plan activities for bringing their community members together to learn about Firewise practices and promoting action that translates to Firewise efforts within your community. Whether hosting a fair at the local fire department, holding a neighborhood clean up or chipping day, or working with members of the state forestry or

a local agency to provide services that support Firewise endeavors, there is another thing you should be mindful of when making your annual plans: Firewise has FREE materials that you can use to complement your activities!

For example, since 2001, the Firewise video “Wildfire! Preventing Home Ignitions,” has been providing helpful information to residents in communities that are putting Firewise principles into practice. A decade later, the video is still widely used. And the program has produced additional videos with helpful insights on implementing Firewise practices. To get a free DVD copy, visit the Firewise area of the NFPA online catalog at www.nfpa.org/catalog.

NFPA also has a YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/nf-padotorg) where you can view many wildfire safety videos online.

You can order checklists, books, and brochures from the catalog as well, with no charge and free domestic ground shipping in the U.S. These helpful materials can supplement any information you plan to provide to your community members about wildfire safety.

Using these resources can bolster your own efforts and activities, while saving time and energy where research and creating materials from scratch is concerned. Reviewing these materials may even help spark new ideas for the Firewise Day you’re planning for 2011.

As you make your plans, or move toward implementing them, ask yourself whether any of these resources could be useful to include. And ask any partners you may work with to put on your Firewise activity whether they have any resources that also might be helpful or informative to the success of your event.

Editor’s Note: If you have a story you would like to share about your community’s efforts or have a unique activity that would benefit other Firewise communities, please submit a description of your activity to Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org.

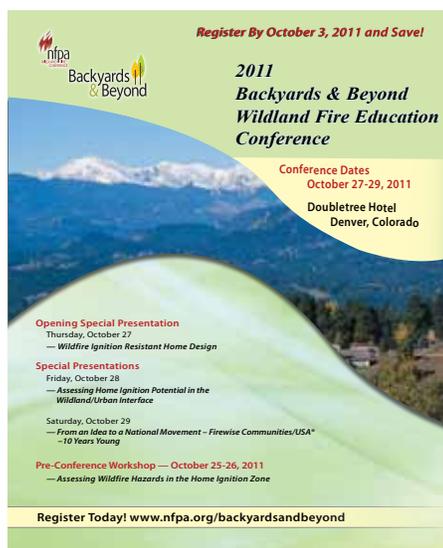
Visit the New Firewise Web site!

The new, improved Firewise web site has been launched. Be sure to check it out by visiting www.firewise.org.



FIREWISE® RESOURCES

Backyards and Beyond: Have You Registered Yet?



NFPA's Wildland Fire Operations Division will be holding the 2011 Backyards & Beyond Wildland Fire Education Conference in Denver, Colorado.

A pre-conference workshop, *Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone*, will be presented Tuesday and Wednesday, October 25 – 26 by Jack Cohen, Research Physical Scientist, USDA Forest Service and Gary Marshall, Firewise Regional Advisor.

The conference will be held Thursday, October 27 – Saturday, October 29, 2011, at the DoubleTree Hotel Denver, Colorado.

Three special presentations will be offered during the conference. The first will be featured during Thursday's Opening General Session with Cassy Robinson from the Savannah River National Laboratory who will present *Wildland Ignition Resistant Home Design (WIRHD)*, a science-based software program that provides community developers and homeowners the ability to assess and understand fire risks due to nearby wildfire.

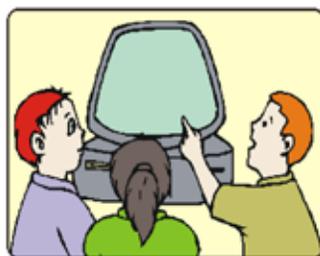
On Friday, Steve Quarles from IBHS and Jack Cohen from the US Forest Service, will present the second highlighted presentation on *Assessing Home Ignition Potential in the Wildland/Urban Interface* discussing the research findings from modeling, experiments and actual disaster examinations that the WIRHD software is based. And, then Saturday the conference will wrap up with Jack Cohen and Michele Steinberg, Firewise Program Manager with *From an Idea to a National Movement - Firewise Communities/USA - 10 Years Young*, where we will how the 1998 International Crown Fire Modeling Experiment played a role in the Firewise program to where we are today, celebrating more than 700 recognized sites and explore the future of the program.

In addition, with more than 50 breakout sessions in five educational tracks, the Backyards & Beyond Wildland Fire Conference offers a unique opportunity to build relationships and explore key issues, and brings together leading wildland fire experts, Firewise® community representatives, community planners, civic leaders, homeowners and residents, insurance professionals, landscape architects and others to share best-practices that can be taken back to communities or the workplace.

Don't delay in registering to receive the best rate. Visit www.nfpa.org/backyardsandbeyond for conference and hotel registration information as well as full descriptions of the conference special presentations and breakout sessions.

Engaging Fellow Firewise Friends

As you make your own efforts and engage with other like-minded communities, you will find there are many ways to go about pursuing and renewing Firewise status. You can join Firewise social networks on Facebook (www.facebook.com/firewise), LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com – request membership in the NFPA group and Firewise sub-



group) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/firewise>), and keep abreast of all kinds of Firewise-related news and information. If you didn't get this How-To newsletter in your email from us, sign up at www.firewise.org.

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