

Firewise Communities / USA® Recognition Program checklist

BY WORKING WITH NEIGHBORS, individual residents can make their own property – and their neighborhood – much safer from the flames and embers of a wildfire. [The Firewise Communities/USA® Recognition Program](#) provides a series of steps so you and your neighbors can act now ahead of a wildfire threat.

Ready to begin? Follow these steps on your way to becoming an official Firewise community.

- 1. Talk to your neighbors.**
You may be surprised to learn that other residents are just as concerned as you are about wildfire, so make a pledge to get started ... now.
 - Schedule a time to meet with the state liaison or his/her designee to provide a community wildfire risk evaluation. Plan on at least one full day for this activity.
 - At the same time, contact your local fire official who will accompany the state liaison for the evaluation.

- 2. Recruit interested community members.**
These people will form a diverse Firewise® board or committee. The group should include homeowners and fire professionals, but may also include planners, land managers, urban foresters and members of other interest groups in your community.
 - Choose a group leader/representative. (This person, often known as the “sparkplug,” will serve as the spokesperson and take the lead on Firewise initiatives.)

- 3. Contact Firewise.**
Have the community representative complete an on-line request form on the [“contact us”](#) page on the Firewise website (www.firewise.org), or call the [Firewise Communities Program](#) office at 617-984-7486. A Firewise representative can answer your questions, and help you get started.

- 4. Schedule a site assessment visit.**
This is the first step of the process of achieving Firewise Communities/USA recognition status.
 - Have the community representative contact your state’s Firewise Communities/USA liaison, a specialist in wildland/urban interface (WUI) fire, to inquire about a site assessment and evaluation of your community’s current wildfire readiness. Your [state liaison’s contact information](#) is available on the Firewise website.

- 5. Review the site assessment and evaluation document.**
The assessment does not have a specific format, but the program endorses an assessment style that:
 - Includes a simple document for homeowners/residents to review the potential community site.
 - Familiarizes the homeowner/resident with the way ignitions are likely to occur and how homes are likely to be lost in the event of a wildfire.
 - Explains and illustrates common strengths and vulnerabilities with respect to this site’s wildfire risk.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the state liaison or designee will schedule a meeting with your local Firewise committee to review the findings of your community assessment. At this time, your committee will determine whether they accept the findings or reject them. If you accept the evaluation, the process continues; if you don’t, the process is terminated.

6. Create a plan.

Based on the evaluation and assessment, your Firewise committee develops a plan to tackle problem areas. In your plan, remember to include deadlines and a schedule to keep you on track. Record your action plan, and have all members of your committee sign it. Your plan should include:

- One day during the year that is designated as “Firewise Day.” Whether it’s a “chipper day” that gathers equipment and volunteers to chip up brush and tree limbs, a state fair exhibit or a community clean-up day, the Firewise Day helps you get the work done to make your community safer.
- Firewise mitigation activities that amount to a community investment of more than \$2/capita/year of ‘in-kind’ volunteer contribution or grants.
- Once the plan is finished, share it with your state liaison.

7. Implement your plan.

Tackle the items in your plan. Designate the party responsible for each action, including who will take the lead on Firewise Day. Remember, everything you do should be documented, so you can send the paperwork in with your application form.

8. Apply for recognition in the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program.

You’ve completed your plan; now it’s time to receive the recognition you deserve. Not only is your community safer from wildfire, you will now be able to celebrate your official status as a nationally recognized Firewise community. Remember to:

- Fill out the [application form](#)
- Attach your completed Firewise community plan
- Attach the Firewise Day document that lists names of volunteers, the hours involved and activities you’ve accomplished
- Attach any photos that illustrate your great work

- Send your completed application and attached documents to your state liaison for review
- Your state liaison will forward the application to the NFPA Firewise program headquarters. You can expect to receive your recognition materials (sign, plaque and other items) within 2-4 weeks after NFPA receives your application.

9. Renew your application each year.

The work of a Firewise community is never done. To maintain active status in the program, you must continue the work throughout the year, documenting all activities, including your Firewise Day, the hours involved, and the volunteers. The information is easy [to report through the Firewise website](#).

10. Celebrate your success!

We want to hear from you! Share your story with the Firewise Communities Program family. We’ll include your photos and activities on the Firewise website, feature your community in our [blog](#), and promote your hard work through our [social media platforms](#).

Questions?

[Contact](#) the Firewise Communities Program. More information can be found on the [Firewise website](#).