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Firewise Program: Framework for Action

What is Firewise?

The Firewise USA® Program, developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), encourages local solutions for safety by involving homeowners in taking individual responsibility for preparing their homes and properties for the risk of wildfire.

- Education-focused program provides resources to help homeowners adapt to living with wildfires and encourages neighbors to work together to take action now to prevent losses.
- Volunteer-led program focusing on defensible space, home hardening, and forest stewardship.
- Homeowners have the potential to receive a discount on homeowners' insurance*
- Firewise Communities are eligible for grant funded fuels reduction projects.

How to Participate?

- To start a Firewise community, you need at least 8 residents.
- You must document at least 1 hour of work per year on your property to stay a part of the community. This document needs to be turned into your Firewise lead/committee.
- You are encouraged to attend 1 community gathering every year with a local agency educating your community on the importance of defensible space, home hardening, first aid, evacuation plans, risk of wildfire, or other educational options.

Want to be a Firewise Lead/Committee Member?

- Community Lead/Co-Leads will be the primary point of contact for Sierra RCD, CAL FIRE, & NFPA and local residents.
- Log community hours and investments, collaborate with Sierra RCD and other agencies to develop possible projects that make the community more fire-safe, identify areas of improvement within the community and direct those needs to future action plans.

What are the Steps to become a Firewise Community?

- **Community Risk Assessment:** Evaluates wildfire risks in a community by examining defensible space, home hardening, and fire hazards. Sierra RCD, CAL FIRE, and Lead/Committee Members, conduct the assessment, identify risks, and finalize recommendations for the community.
- **Boundary Map:** Shows the boundaries of your community, and every dwelling unit included will be a part of the Firewise Community. Sierra RCD can assist you with this part of your application.
- **3-Year Action Plan:** Using the Risk Assessment, create an action plan for 3 years that identifies and prioritizes actions for defensible space, home hardening, evacuation planning, and education.

• *Not all Insurances offer a Firewise discount. Use the QR code above to find out more.

• **Application documents can be found on Firewise Portal: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>

The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Firewise USA® program is designed to encourage and assist communities in taking responsibility for their own wildfire risk by implementing proactive measures to reduce the likelihood of wildfire damage. The program provides resources and guidance to help communities develop and maintain fire-resistant landscapes and buildings, thereby enhancing their overall resilience to wildfires.

The Sierra Resource Conservation District has taken the lead on coordinating Firewise Communities within Eastern Fresno County. By participating in the Firewise USA® program, communities can significantly reduce their risk of wildfire damage, protect lives and properties, and enhance their overall safety and resilience in the face of increasing wildfire threats.

Key Components of the Firewise Program

A) Education and Awareness:

The Firewise program gives residents essential knowledge about wildfire risks and strategies to reduce them. Participants learn to create defensible space, harden homes, and recognize local fire behavior. Firewise members gain access to expert advice, free personalized recommendations, and educational tools like workshops to support safer, informed decisions.

B) Community Involvement:

Firewise encourages neighbors to collaborate on wildfire risk reduction through community workdays, townhalls, and planning meetings. These efforts strengthen community bonds and improve preparedness. Members have a voice in prioritizing projects, and active communities may qualify for grant funding from nonprofits and agencies to support projects and outreach aligned with their 3-year plans.

C) Assessment and Planning:

Each Firewise community begins with a custom risk assessment and action plan. With support from Firewise, CAL FIRE, and Sierra RCD, communities evaluate property and neighborhood risks and develop flexible strategies to reduce vulnerabilities. Members may receive a free Fire Risk Evaluation and access to educational materials and workshops.

D) Mitigation Strategies:

Firewise promotes actions like clearing brush, removing dead vegetation, limbing trees, and using fire-resistant materials. With expert guidance and community-wide efforts, these practices reduce wildfire threats and improve long-term safety.

E) Recognition and Support:

Firewise USA® recognition showcases a community's wildfire preparedness. This status can increase agency support, attract funding opportunities, encourage neighbor connections, and boost community pride and offer possible fire insurance discounts.

F) Resources and Training:

Sierra RCD and Firewise USA® offer training, materials, and expert support. These include workshops, events, and potential funding opportunities for community fuels reduction and wildfire mitigation, empowering communities to become more fire resilient.

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