



**FIREWISE USA**<sup>®</sup>  
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS



## Detailed Application Process Information

The Firewise USA<sup>®</sup> program is split into two phases: the “Application Process” and “Maintaining Firewise Recognition”.

### **1) Organize:**

Form a committee of residents and wildfire stakeholders. This group will collaborate on developing the community’s risk reduction priorities, develop a multi-year action plan based on risk assessment, and oversee the completion of the annual renewal requirements. This is the first step of the process as residents included on the committee will be key coordinators for accomplishing the rest of the application process.

Residents on the committee can include those in on an HOA board or involved in the local neighborhood association, if applicable, along with interested residents. Consider inviting representatives from the local Fire Department, Fire Safe Councils, and property management to participate. Fire Department staff and Fire Safe Council members can assist with the application process, organize community members, if needed, and provide connections to relevant personnel. For communities with an HOA board, it is highly recommended that the Architecture Chair is included on the Firewise committee so that any action items under their purview can be coordinated.

A minimum of 1 committee member from the community needs to be identified and listed on the Firewise application as the point of contact for the community. At least 2 people should be included in the application, but not more than 5 people is recommended. This person(s) will be the contact person for Firewise and simply get the e-mail reminders to submit the annual renewal documents.

### **2) Plan:**

**Draw a site boundary** outlining the homes and current or proposed vegetation management zones in your community draw a site boundary indicating the homes and current or proposed vegetation management zones within your community. This can be done in Google Maps, Google Earth Pro, or the Ventura County Fire Safe Council can create a map for the community.

There can only be a single contiguous site boundary, meaning if there is a large gap between the homes the community wants to include in their boundary, that area must be included in the boundary or two separate Firewise USA<sup>®</sup> communities must be made.

Community common areas should be included in the boundary, along with adjacent open spaces that will not or cannot be managed by the community but impacts a community's fire risk.

To determine which homes should be included in your site boundary depends on the structure of the community. This is easier for smaller communities who live on a single road, are in small HOA's, or are geographically isolated from other neighborhoods.

For meandering neighborhoods or large HOA's (400+ homes), it is a little harder to set boundaries. In this case, it is recommended to break up large groupings of homes into smaller groups of homes as this will increase participation.

Community boundaries can be changed over time to include or exclude other homes.

### **3) Conduct a Risk Assessment:**

Conduct a Risk Assessment to examine defensible space, ember resistant features of the home, and general community wildfire risks. The assessment is an important part of the Firewise USA® application process that helps identify and guide your priorities and activities. The risk assessment will be the committee's primary tool in determining the risk reduction priorities within the community boundaries.

Communities should reach out to their local fire department or fire safe council to evaluate their community for wildfire hazards and professional advice of how to mitigate those hazards. See the NFPA Firewise USA® Community Wildfire Risk Assessment form.

The Ventura County Fire Department and Fire Safe Council's encourage communities and households to sign up to receive a **free home evaluation** so each homeowner is informed on what features of their home increase their risk to wildfire. The homeowner is under no obligation to complete any of the recommendations and there is no regulatory enforcement associated with the evaluation. Additionally, the home evaluation will provide the necessary information to complete the risk assessment.

### **4) Apply to Firewise:**

Create an account and log into Firewise USA® to start the application process.

<https://portal.firewise.org/user/login>

### **5) Develop a 3-Year Plan:**

Develop a 3-year plan outlining actions the community will take or would like to take to reduce community wildfire risk, in addition to recommendations for homeowners and suggested education activities that participants will strive to complete annually or over the period of multiple years.

## **6) Do Wildfire Reduction Efforts:**

**Community Education.** Host at least 1 community education activity per year. This can include discussing wildfire preparedness at community annual meetings, conducting a practice evacuation, or handing out a wildfire informational packet to community members.

**Volunteer Hours.** Every household must complete a minimum of 1 volunteer hour or spend \$28 on an activity that reduces wildfire risk in your community or on your property. This can include yard work such as raking leaves, paying a landscaper, assisting on the Firewise USA® application, or attending a presentation from the Fire Department. While there is a minimum volunteer hour requirement, it is recommended to report as many hours as possible. These numbers can help your community with future grant applications.

## **7) Estimate the amount of vegetation removal:**

Estimate the amount of vegetation removal from the community in common areas and resident homes. Communities can use a simple diagram to help provide a rough estimate. Firewise does not require a minimum amount of vegetation removal.

**8) Maintain Recognition** - Record and report 1) the community education activities completed, 2) volunteer hours and finances spent on wildfire risk mitigation activities in the community, and 3) removed vegetation within the community common areas and resident properties. Every 3 years update the action plan and every 5 years redo the risk assessment.