

Ten Steps to Becoming a Firewise Community

Are you worried about wildfire in your community? Join the Shasta County Fire Safe Council in forming a Firewise Community. This voluntary program is administered by the National Fire Prevention Association to assist communities in reducing their risk of loss of homes and property to wildfire. Join the growing number of communities in Shasta County who are working to ensure safer conditions through Firewise recognition.

The following steps detail the process of becoming a Firewise community, and the ways in which the Shasta County Fire Safe Council (SCFSC) can support your community in this process:

Step 1: Schedule a Firewise community orientation meeting with SCFSC. The purpose of this meeting is to educate your community on the following topics:

- What is Firewise?
- What are the benefits of Firewise recognition?
- How can my community gain Firewise recognition?

Tasks to be completed by community:

- Reach out to SCFSC to confirm their availability for an orientation meeting - choose a date.
- Organize a location. Good meeting locations include community centers, volunteer fire halls, schools etc.
- Advertise the event - flyers posted within the community, community message boards, social media and word of mouth are all great ways to get the word out.

Tasks to be completed by SCFSC:

- Give a presentation on Firewise, answer community's questions about the program.
- If necessary, SCFSC has a projector and screen for sharing the presentation. All that is necessary is access to electricity.

Step 2: Form a committee of resident volunteers to represent your community. Identify a leader who will be the program point of contact.

Step 3: Define the boundaries of the site and determine the number of individual single family dwelling units within the site. A Firewise community can be a minimum of 8 dwelling units and a maximum of 2,500. Multiple Firewise USA sites can be located within a city/town or master-planned community/HOA.

- Tip: Not sure how to define the boundaries of your community? Concerned about how to coordinate a large number of households? Sometimes smaller is better. A Firewise community can be comprised of as few as **8 households**. If you are not sure where to start, consider your street or your immediate neighborhood area.

Step 4: Obtain a map of your proposed Firewise community. If needed, SCFSC and CalFire can assist in creating/obtaining a map. Reach out to SCFSC to request this assistance.

Step 5: Committee works with the community to log Investment Hours. Investment Hours are hours worked by community members, or money spent (\$25.43 = 1 hour), towards home-hard-

ening or defensible space. Firewise requires 1 hour (or the monetary equivalent) per household per year (this is reported to Firewise through the online portal - more on the portal in Step 9). For example: If your Firewise community has 50 households, then you must report 50 Investment Hours per year per household.

For examples on time and expense investments, see here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Firewise/Get-started/FirewiseTimeExpenseInvestmentExamples.ashx>.

For the Firewise Volunteer Hourly Worksheet, see here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Firewise/Get-started/FirewiseVolunteerHourlyWorksheet.ashx>. Your committee may use this sheet to collect hours reported, but they are not required to. If you want to make your own hours reporting form, or create an online reporting tool (such as Google Sheets), that is also acceptable.

When the committee applies for Firewise recognition, they will be asked to report 1 year worth of Investment Hours. This does not mean that the committee must wait a year to apply, it just means that they need to be able to collect a years worth of hours to report. Although good community participation is encouraged, it is challenging to get every single household to participate, no matter how active of a community you have. As long as you collect the correct number of hours per year, it does not matter which households they came from (ie some households may report many hours, and some may report none).

Step 6: The committee collaborates with local wildfire experts (ie Cal Fire, volunteer fire chief, SCFSC staff etc), to complete a Community Wildfire Risk Assessment. The board or committee and local wildfire experts will take a tour of the proposed Firewise community to gain a community-wide view that identifies areas of successful wildfire risk reduction and areas where improvements could be made. Emphasis should be on the general conditions of homes and related home ignition zones. After the tour, all parties present will sit down and fill out the Firewise Community Risk Assessment form, which can be found here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Firewise/Get-started/FirewiseCommAssess.ashx>.

The assessment is a living document and needs to be updated at a minimum of every 5 years.

Firewise USA provides an online tutorial detailing the risk assessment process: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA/Online-learning-opportunities/Community-Wildfire-Risk-Assessment-Tutorial>.

Contact SCFSC for assistance scheduling your Community Risk Assessment Tour.

Step 7: The committee utilizes the completed Community Risk Assessment to create a Three Year Action Plan for the community. The Action Plan should be broken down by year and identify and prioritize actions to reduce ignition risk to homes. These can include community wide investments along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually, or over a period of multiple years. The Three Year Action Plan should include one Education Day per year.

Sites in California are required to use a specific template - The California Specific Three Year Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/firewise-communities/california-template-3-year-action-plan-2/>. If your Three Year Action

Plan is not on this template, your application will not be accepted. An example Action Plan can be found at the end of this document. Please note that it is not on the CA template.

This document is required to be updated at least every three years. As circumstances change (e.g., completing activities, experiencing a fire or a natural disaster, new construction in community, etc.), the action plan may need to be updated more frequently.

Step 8: Committee applies for Firewise recognition. To do this, you will be asked to create a Firewise portal here: <https://portal.firewise.org/user/login>. The portal will walk you through the steps of reporting the members of your committee, uploading your Community Risk Assessment, map of your community's boundaries, Three Year Action Plan, and 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.

Need help navigating your portal? Contact SCFSC for assistance.

Step 9: Your Firewise state liaison will notify you 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 detail for you the issues with your application. Once these issues have been resolved, you can resubmit your application.

Step 10: Congratulations on becoming an officially recognized Firewise site! To remain in Good Standing (ie retain your Firewise status), you will need to renew your status annually by reporting on your yearly activities and Investment Hours. All reporting is done in your portal.

How can SCFSC help with this process? Throughout this document, areas are specified where SCFSC may be of help. If you are stuck, needing assistance or clarification on **any** step of the process, please reach out to us: firewise@shastafiresafe.org.

The Shasta County Fire Safe Council is here for your community!

Example Three Year Action Plan:

Year 1 (2019)

- Increased resident awareness of fire danger through incorporation of wildfire safety education in conjunction with the annual meeting and neighborhood newsletter. Development of a neighborhood evacuation plan in conjunction with fire department to ensure all residents understand the importance of Ready-Set-Go planning.
- Increase maintenance of vegetation adjacent to structures to remove decadent material and flammable species
- Conduct maintenance of duff and litter under mature trees
- Trim trees to create a minimum 5' air gap
- Remove dead tree litter and other combustible material from roofs and gutters
- Hold a community chipping day or community dumpster to accelerate biomass removal.

Year 2 (2020)

- Expand 2019 efforts by conducting a neighborhood evacuation exercise and developing block captains. Continue wildfire awareness education focusing on vegetation in back and side yards.
- Enhanced efforts to reduce fire load in back and side yard areas. In conjunction with fire department, organize community chipping days to leverage this work, and continue neighborhood walk-throughs with Fire Marshall and Fire Mitigation Officers.
- Schedule National Night Out program for community-wide awareness in our community and neighborhoods
- Form a Fire Safe Council with the Firewise Community Resident Leaders of community working towards advocating Firewise principles within our community and with City Council and residents.
- Prepare a National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day project the 1st Saturday in May
- Organize workshops for residents on hardening your home and planting fire resistant plants. Utilize Fire Marshall and Firesafe Council as speakers.
- Educate residents through workshops and newsletters on the new proposed Fire Codes.

Year 3 (2021)

- Review 2020 education efforts and expand awareness of the threat by incorporating recent fire behavior. Continue to develop block captain system to build bottom up resiliency in the community.
- Build upon successes of 2019 and 2020, and work with Fire Marshall on new priorities for this year.
- Ensure we have 100% compliance with Firewise requirements within our HOA neighborhoods.