

IAFC Wildland Fire Programs

How the Fire Department Can Help the Community Prepare for Wildfire



Community wildfire readiness is a concept used by local residents, fire and emergency responders, business owners, builders, civic groups, and local leaders who take steps to increase their safety and become prepared for the threat of wildland fire. It's not a matter of if, but *when* the next wildland fire will occur in wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas. To create a community ready to face the threat of a wildfire, all audiences must be actively engaged in the solution. Part of this movement comes with an increased understanding of wildland fire. Wildland fires don't only occur where there is forest vegetation, but include rangelands, grasslands, prairielands, agricultural land, etc. A wildland fire may occur in your back yard and doesn't need to garner national news to put yourself, your family, your community, and firefighters at risk.



The fire department's role is a vital piece in creating change. Your background, fire service expertise, and actions should be used to empower others within the community you serve to increase their safety and the safety of fire department personnel, while potentially decreasing property loss and damage. Educating the various audiences within your community to acknowledge an outdoor wildland fire threat, to take advanced action, and building partnerships on a local level are the first steps in reducing wildland fire risk to your community.

Reach out: Building partnerships with various audiences strengthens the message and ultimately magnifies the fire service's fire-adapted safety message. Use your trusted voice and reach out to these audiences:

- Developers & Builders
- Civic & Community Leaders
- Forest & Land Managers
- Residents & Homeowners Associations
- Fire & Emergency Responders

Develop or build upon existing partnerships with your local emergency management agency and local leaders, such as elected officials, community leaders, and supporting organizations. These agencies and leaders will become key players in the event of a wildland fire. Ensure that a unified message is being disseminated to the public. Reach out to local businesses to get them involved in the fire-adapted effort; plan a joint event open to the public. Present to civic groups and neighborhood associations – get the ball rolling and others will follow suit. Review the Creating a Community Coalition Guidance document for tips on forming a diverse group of leaders within your community. If they aren't yet taking steps toward creating a community that is wildfire ready, express the importance of doing so. Encourage them and share your experiences.

Explain your role in mitigation and response, and how thinly resources are spread during a wildland fire event. School-aged children are members of your community, too! Don't underestimate the influence potential you have on this group. With repetitive instruction, Ready, Set, Go! & other wildland fire preparedness efforts can be engrained and effective, just as Stop, Drop, and Roll or E.D.I.T.H.

Collaborate with your local law enforcement and other first response agencies. In many instances, law enforcement agencies are responsible for leading evacuation and re-entry efforts during a wildland fire event. It is important for residents to understand the importance of acting early and the repopulation processes in place. Each of these groups is an asset and an essential part of the fire-adapted community effort. Consider enlisting help from your area's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); train and supply them with outreach materials to expand your outreach capabilities. This can also be accomplished by joining forces with your neighboring fire organizations. These joint efforts not only extend the reach, they can improve department relations and perhaps spark other collaborative efforts.

Each of the audiences mentioned have an important role in creating a fire-adapted community. You can make a difference; behavioral change can start with your department – Be a leader!

Take advantage of free resources from the IAFC and other FAC Coalition partners!

IAFC resources include public service announcement videos and radio ads and wildland fire preparedness information for the resident. There is a wide variety of RSG resources available to members. Many are audience specific, such as National Action Guides for the resident, RSG information brochures for farmers & ranchers, youth audiences, and the seasonal resident & property owner. Many of the IAFC and RSG resources are available in English and Spanish-languages.

FAC Coalition partner resources include materials from the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety, The Nature Conservancy, National Fire Protection Association, U.S. Fire Administration, and USDA Forest Service. Listed materials are free; many are available for download and are useful in reaching out to varied audiences.

Visit www.iafc.org/wildland for more information and links.



Use the Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Program information and customizable tools to begin educating your community about wildland fire preparedness efforts. To learn more, visit www.wildlandfireRSG.org and join over 1,200 members in the wildland fire solution today.

RSG
Membership & Resources
are FREE! Join today!
Wildlandfirersg.org

To learn more about helping your community prepare for wildland fire, visit www.iafc.org/Wildland