



## CITY HALL

CITY OF ANGELS PO Box 667, 200 Monte Verda St. Suite B, Angels Camp, CA 95222 P: (209) 736-2181

**DATE:** April 15, 2025  
**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** John Rohrbaugh, Fire Chief  
**RE:** Firewise USA Information

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council, Staff and the Fire Department support any neighborhood within our City that would want to pursue establishing a Firewise USA program within their community.

### **BACKGROUND**

Firewise USA is a national program created by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to help communities reduce the risk of wildfires. The program provides education, resources, and support for homeowners, neighborhoods, and local governments to take proactive steps in making their properties and communities more resistant to wildfire damage.

The official website for Firewise USA is hosted by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The Firewise USA can access the website at [nfpa.org](http://nfpa.org). This site offers comprehensive information about the Firewise USA program, including steps to become a recognized Firewise community, resources for wildfire risk reduction, and details on existing Firewise sites.

Firewise USA does the following:

- Promotes wildfire preparedness: Educates communities on how to prepare for wildfire, such as creating defensible space and using fire-resistant landscaping and building materials.
- Encourages community collaboration: Residents work together to develop local wildfire mitigation plans.
- Provides a recognition program: Communities can apply to become official Firewise USA sites by meeting specific criteria.



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To be recognized as a Firewise USA community, a community typically needs to:

1. Form a board or committee of neighborhood homeowners that oversees the program locally.
2. Obtain a wildfire risk assessment from local fire officials or forestry experts.
3. Develop an action plan based on the assessment, outlining steps to reduce wildfire risks.
4. Hold an annual Firewise Day to educate and involve residents.
5. Invest a minimum of \$24.14 per home per year in wildfire risk reduction efforts (this can be in volunteer hours, grant funding, or direct spending).

Staff acknowledges the value provided by Firewise USA due to the following reasons:

- Wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change.
- Homes in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) – areas where homes meet or mix with undeveloped wildlands – are especially vulnerable.
- Firewise principles have been shown to help homes survive wildfires and improve firefighter safety.

Staff noted tips that Firewise USA shares with homeowners such as:

- Maintaining a 5-foot noncombustible zone around the home.
- Keeping roof and gutters free of leaves and pine needles.
- Trim tree limbs at least 10 feet from structures.
- Store firewood and flammable materials at least 30 feet away from buildings.
- Use Class A fire-rated roofing materials.

Per Firewise USA's website, becoming a recognized Firewise USA site involves a five-step process which entails:

1. Forming a Firewise USA Board or Committee  
Establish a group of residents committed to wildfire risk reduction. This team will lead the community's efforts and serve as the primary point of contact with the Firewise USA program.
2. Obtaining a Community Wildfire Risk Assessment  
Conduct an assessment to identify the community's wildfire hazards. This evaluation should be facilitated by fire professionals, such as local fire department personnel or state forestry representatives and be specific to the neighborhood. The assessment will provide a baseline understanding of the area's risk factors.



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### 3. Developing a Three-Year Action Plan

Based on the risk assessment findings, create a strategic plan outlining specific, measurable wildfire risk reduction project. This plan should detail activities to be undertaken over three years, assigning responsibilities and timelines for each task.

### 4. Investing in Risk Reduction Efforts

Demonstrate the community's commitment by investing a minimum of \$24.14 per dwelling unit annually in wildfire risk reduction actions. This investment can include volunteer hours, in-kind services, or monetary expenditures related to mitigation activities.

### 5. Submitting an Application through the Firewise USA Portal

With the previous steps completed, submit your community's application via the Firewise USA online portal. This submission should include details of your board, risk assessment, action plan, and documentation of investments. Upon approval, your community will receive official recognition as a Firewise USA site.

By following these steps, your community can enhance its resilience to wildfires and gain national recognition for its proactive efforts.

## **Firewise community assessment**

To obtain a Firewise USA assessment for your community, follow these steps: This step is after you form a Board or committee.

### 1. Contact Your State Liaison

Interested parties should reach out to the state Firewise liaison. They can connect you with experts who conduct community wildfire risk evaluations. The local fire department may also assist in this process.

### 2. Utilize NFPA Resources

NFPA offers an interactive online tool designed to guide communities through the risk assessment process. This resource can help you organize and document your assessment effectively.

### 3. Engage with Local Experts

Collaborate with local forestry agencies or fire departments to conduct the assessment. They can provide valuable insights into the specific wildfire risks in your area.

By completing a wildfire risk assessment, your community takes a crucial step toward becoming a recognized Firewise USA site, enhancing preparedness and resilience against wildfires.



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### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding Firewise**

#### How Many dwellings qualify for a Firewise community?

To qualify as a Firewise USA community, the area must consist of at least 8 dwelling units (such as homes or apartment units) and can include up to 2,500 dwelling units. This range allows for flexibility, accommodating both small neighborhoods and larger communities in wildfire risk reduction efforts

#### How many neighborhood Board members are needed?

NFPA does not specify the required number of members for a Firewise USA community board or committee. The size of the board should be appropriate to the community's size and needs, ensuring sufficient representation and capacity to implement Firewise initiatives.

#### Insurance Discounts & Benefits

Yes, participating in the Firewise USA program can potentially help members living in Firewise USA communities to get an insurance discount or other benefits, depending on the resident's insurance provider and state of residency.

Some insurance companies offer perks if the property or community is recognized as Firewise, such as:

- Discounts on insurance premium
- Policy renewals or protections in high fire-risk areas
- Access to fire mitigation grants or support services

#### Examples of Insurance Companies that May Offer Benefits

- **USAA:** Offers discounts to members in Firewise-recognized communities (especially in states like California and Colorado).
- **State Farm:** Has supported the Firewise program, but discounts vary.
- **Local or regional insurers:** Some may offer incentives to Firewise community members.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

No financial impact on the City.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATION**

The City has determined that the action of sharing information before the City Council and the public regarding Firewise USA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) – also known as the “common sense exemption” – where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that said action may have a significant effect on the environment.



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