



FOR LEADERS

Protecting Communities from Wildfires: **A LEADERSHIP** **GUIDE**

Wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense due to prolonged droughts and increased development in fire-prone areas. Leaders at all levels—whether in government, emergency services, or community organizations—play a crucial role in protecting communities from these devastating disasters. Here are key actions leaders can take to safeguard lives, properties, and the environment from wildfires.

1 Implement Proactive Fire Prevention Policies

Leaders can reduce wildfire risks by enacting and enforcing fire prevention policies. These measures may include:

- ▶ Enforcing fire-resistant building codes in wildfire-prone areas.
- ▶ Prohibiting building materials that exacerbate wildfire risk.

- ▶ Restricting outdoor burning and fireworks during dry seasons.
- ▶ Encouraging the creation of defensible space around homes and businesses.
- ▶ Supporting controlled burns to reduce hazardous vegetation.

By establishing clear guidelines and regulations, leaders can help prevent fires before they start.

2 Invest in Early Detection and Rapid Response Systems

Wildfires can spread quickly, so early detection and a fast response are essential. Leaders should prioritize:

- ▶ Installing remote sensing and fire detection cameras in high-risk areas.
- ▶ Utilizing satellite data and AI-powered fire prediction models.



- ▶ Strengthening emergency response infrastructure, including firefighting resources and personnel.
- ▶ Developing an effective wildfire alert system that notifies residents in real-time.

Investing in technology and response strategies can save lives and minimize damage.

3 Strengthen Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Planning

A well-prepared community is less vulnerable to wildfires. Leaders can enhance emergency preparedness by:

- ▶ Creating a communications text group, phone tree, or other method to ensure wildfire alerts can be shared swiftly across the affected area.
- ▶ Conducting regular wildfire drills for residents and first responders.
- ▶ Creating and publicizing evacuation routes

and safety zones.

- ▶ Providing emergency supply kits and preparedness resources to households.
- ▶ Establishing community emergency response teams to assist during crises.

Preparedness efforts ensure that residents know what to do when a wildfire threatens their area.

4 Enhance Community Engagement and Education

Raising awareness about wildfire risks and safety measures empowers communities to take action. Leaders can:

- ▶ Organize town hall meetings and workshops on wildfire mitigation.
- ▶ Distribute educational materials on fire-resistant landscaping and home hardening.
- ▶ Engage with schools, businesses, and local organizations to spread wildfire safety messages.

- ▶ Promote volunteer programs for community clean-ups and firebreak maintenance.

Educated communities are more resilient and proactive in reducing fire hazards.

5 Secure Funding for Wildfire Mitigation Efforts

Mitigation efforts require financial resources. Leaders should:

- ▶ Advocate for federal and state funding to support wildfire prevention initiatives.
- ▶ Partner with businesses, nonprofits, and academic institutions for research and resource-sharing.
- ▶ Provide grants and incentives for homeowners to implement fire-resistant upgrades.
- ▶ Invest in local firefighting resources, including equipment and training programs.

A well-funded mitigation strategy can significantly reduce wildfire threats and improve emergency response capabilities.

6 Encourage Sustainable Land and Forest Management

Poor land management can exacerbate wildfire risks. Leaders can promote sustainable practices by:

- ▶ Supporting reforestation and forest thinning projects to maintain healthy ecosystems.
- ▶ Implementing zoning laws that prevent development in high-risk wildfire zones.
- ▶ Encouraging responsible agricultural and grazing practices to reduce fire fuel.
- ▶ Working with environmental organizations to balance conservation and fire prevention.



Sustainable land management reduces the likelihood and intensity of wildfires.

7 Coordinate with Regional and National Agencies

Wildfires often extend beyond local jurisdictions, requiring coordinated responses. Leaders should:

- ▶ Collaborate with state and federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and FEMA.
- ▶ Participate in multi-agency wildfire response exercises.
- ▶ Share resources and intelligence with neighboring communities and regions.
- ▶ Establish mutual aid agreements to strengthen response capabilities.

A coordinated approach enhances efficiency and effectiveness in wildfire prevention and response.