



FOR NEIGHBORS

COMING TOGETHER

How Neighbors Can Mitigate Wildfire Risk in Their Communities

Wildfires are a growing threat in many regions, with increasing temperatures, prolonged droughts, and expanding development in fire-prone areas. While individual homeowners can take steps to protect their properties, a community-wide approach to wildfire mitigation is far more effective.

When neighbors work together, they can significantly reduce wildfire risks and create safer, more resilient communities. Here's how neighbors can unite to mitigate wildfire risks in their neighborhoods.

1 Create a Fire-Adapted Community

A fire-adapted community acknowledges wildfire risks and takes proactive measures to minimize them. Residents can organize meetings to educate each other about fire risks and develop community-wide strategies to protect homes and infrastructure. The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA®) Firewise USA® program provides excellent resources and guidance for communities looking to become WildfireStrong. (visit www.firewise.org)

2 Clear Defensible Space in Common Areas

Defensible space is the buffer around homes and structures that slows wildfire spread. Neighbors can work together to establish and maintain defensible space in common areas and assist

neighbors who need help establishing the space around their homes. Some tips include:

- ▶ Remove dry leaves, dead branches, and other flammable debris from yards and common areas.
- ▶ Prune tree branches to at least 10 feet above the ground.
- ▶ Keep the grass and vegetation well-maintained and watered.
- ▶ Use fire-resistant landscaping, such as stone pathways and native, drought-resistant plants.
- ▶ By coordinating efforts, communities can create more expansive defensible spaces that protect entire neighborhoods rather than just individual properties.



3 Organize Community Clean-Up Days

One of the most effective ways to reduce wildfire risk is through regular community clean-up events. These events can focus on clearing debris, disposing of flammable materials, and maintaining firebreaks. By working together, residents can efficiently remove large amounts of hazardous vegetation and waste, making the area much safer in the event of a fire. Follow the model used for the annual NFPA Wildfire Community Preparedness Day to help protect your neighbors and neighborhood. (visit www.wildfireprepd.org)

4 Develop an Emergency Preparedness Plan

A well-prepared community is better equipped to respond to a wildfire emergency. Neighbors should work together to:

- ▶ Establish an emergency communication network.
- ▶ Identify evacuation routes and emergency meeting points.
- ▶ Share resources, such as emergency kits and fire extinguishers.
- ▶ Keep an updated list of community members who may need assistance

during evacuations, such as the elderly or disabled.

- ▶ Practice an emergency drill to ensure everyone knows what to do when a wildfire threatens the area.

5 Improve Home Fire Resistance

Homes built with fire-resistant materials and proper maintenance are less likely to ignite. Neighbors can support each other by:

- ▶ Replacing wooden roofs and siding with fire-resistant materials.
- ▶ Installing mesh screens over vents to prevent embers from entering homes.
- ▶ Sealing gaps in eaves, decks, and other openings where embers can enter.
- ▶ Encouraging local authorities to enforce fire-safe building codes.
- ▶ Bulk purchasing fire-resistant materials as a community can make these improvements more affordable.

6 Advocate for Fire Safety Policies

- ▶ Communities can work with local governments and fire departments to advocate for policies that enhance fire safety, such as:



- ▶ Adopting and administering the latest versions of modern, model wildfire building codes, including the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code and the Standard for Wildland Fire Protection (NFPA 1140) as well as state codes such as the California Chapter 7A Building Code.
- ▶ Maintaining firebreaks along roads and properties.
- ▶ Restricting activities that could ignite wildfires, such as outdoor burning during dry seasons.

Remember, local officials need your support to take action for fire mitigation efforts.

7 Engage with Local Fire Departments and Organizations

Fire departments, forestry services, and environmental organizations often offer training programs, workshops, and resources to help communities prepare for wildfires. Neighbors can invite experts to guide mitigation efforts and emergency response strategies.

8 Leverage Fire Prevention Technology Tools

Technology can play a crucial role in wildfire mitigation. Communities can use:

- ▶ Fire risk assessment apps and mapping tools to identify high-risk areas.
- ▶ Emergency alert systems to receive real-time wildfire updates.
- ▶ Remote sensing and camera systems to detect fires early.

Neighbors can respond quickly to wildfire threats and minimize damage by staying informed.

Conclusion

Mitigating wildfire risks requires a collective effort. When neighbors come together, they can create fire-adapted communities, clear defensible spaces, organize clean-ups, prepare for emergencies, and advocate for fire safety policies. By working collaboratively, communities can significantly reduce wildfire risks and protect their homes, families, and environment from devastating wildfires.

Wildfire safety is a shared responsibility—start the conversation with your neighbors today and take proactive steps to safeguard your community.