

FIREWISE USA®



Many of us in Oakland live in or near a high fire hazard zone, and the impact of a catastrophic wildfire would be felt in all corners of the city. The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Firewise USA® program teaches us all how to adapt to living with wildfire and supports our communities in working together and taking action to help make our areas more firesafe.

The Oakland Firesafe Council is encouraging Oakland community groups to join the growing network of more than 1,500 Firewise USA® recognized sites from across the nation by taking ownership in preparing and protecting their homes and neighborhoods against the threat of wildfire.

Why Become an NFPA Firewise USA® Site?

The number of homes destroyed and lives lost from wildfire has soared in California during the last 10 years. In 2020 our skies turned an orange colored hue from the numerous wildfires east of the Bay Area.

The NFPA Firewise USA® program promotes steps to better protect all residences and properties and to create defensible spaces to help reduce wildfire risk and minimize the danger to you, your family and your entire community.

Additionally, many insurance companies now require that homes be better protected from wildfire to maintain home-owners insurance, and a growing number of insurers will provide a discount if you are within a Firewise USA® recognized site.

How Does Our Community Become a Firewise USA® Site?

Becoming a Firewise USA® site is a straightforward process for a community group:

1. Form a small committee or team of neighbors who will spearhead the effort. Define the boundaries/properties of the site. Then perform a wildfire Risk Assessment of your area and create an Action Plan of possible risk reduction projects.
2. Inform and educate your community group on the Firewise USA® program, its benefits to everyone, and the proposed Action Plan. Prioritize the Action Plan measures with your neighbors.
3. Over the next year (or sooner), work on the items in the Action Plan to reduce wildfire threat by investing the equivalent of one volunteer hour of effort per household, on average, per year. It's that easy!
4. Report your community group's efforts back to the Firewise USA® program and make plans for which items in the Action Plan to address during the following years.

The Oakland Firesafe Council, Oakland Fire Dept, CAL FIRE and Firewise USA® can all help you as needed during this process.



FIREWISE USA®
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

[firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org)

COMPLETING THE WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

The wildfire Risk Assessment is a **survey that identifies areas of wildfire risk and where improvements could be made.** A fire professional will be available to help create and/or review the Risk Assessment document. The assessment can be performed in a variety of ways, including by walking or driving through the community. Document the conditions of homes and nearby ignition zones such as empty lots and unmaintained areas. Note specific concerns such as combustible debris in Zone 0*, on roofs and in gutters, and inadequate vent screening.

The Risk Assessment speaks to the wildfire risk of the overall community, focusing on:



- vulnerability of homes to embers, surface fire, and tree crown fire
- how well vegetation, especially near structures, is being maintained
- obvious fire hazards on individual properties
- structural characteristics such as roofing, gutters, siding, and decks
- concerns presented by common/open space areas or adjacent public lands

The issues noted in the completed Risk Assessment document will be the primary tool in determining action priorities to be documented in the Action Plan, below.

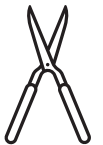
More information can be found on the NFPA Firewise USA® site at: [firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org)

CREATING THE ACTION PLAN

There are numerous measures that residents and communities can then take that are documented in the Action Plan, including:



- clearing highly flammable debris from around homes, especially in Zone 0*
- removing combustible debris on roofs, in gutters and anywhere it collects
- adding 1/8" or finer wire mesh over attic and crawl space vents
- reducing ladder fuels and performing general vegetation management
- maintaining common areas such as empty lots and along streets
- establishing neighborhood emergency preparedness and response plans
- helping other neighbors who may not be able to reduce their wildfire risks



Neighbors can work individually or as a group on these actions. The team then reports their efforts back to Firewise USA® and makes plans for which items to address next year. **These efforts will benefit both the individual neighbors and the entire community by helping to reduce, as much as possible, the destructive effects of a wildfire.**

Example Action Plan measures can be found on the NFPA Firewise USA® site at: [firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org)

*For information on Zone 0 and creating defensible space and following fire-smart landscaping principles, refer to: [Guide #13 – Defensible Space & Landscaping for Fire Safety](#)