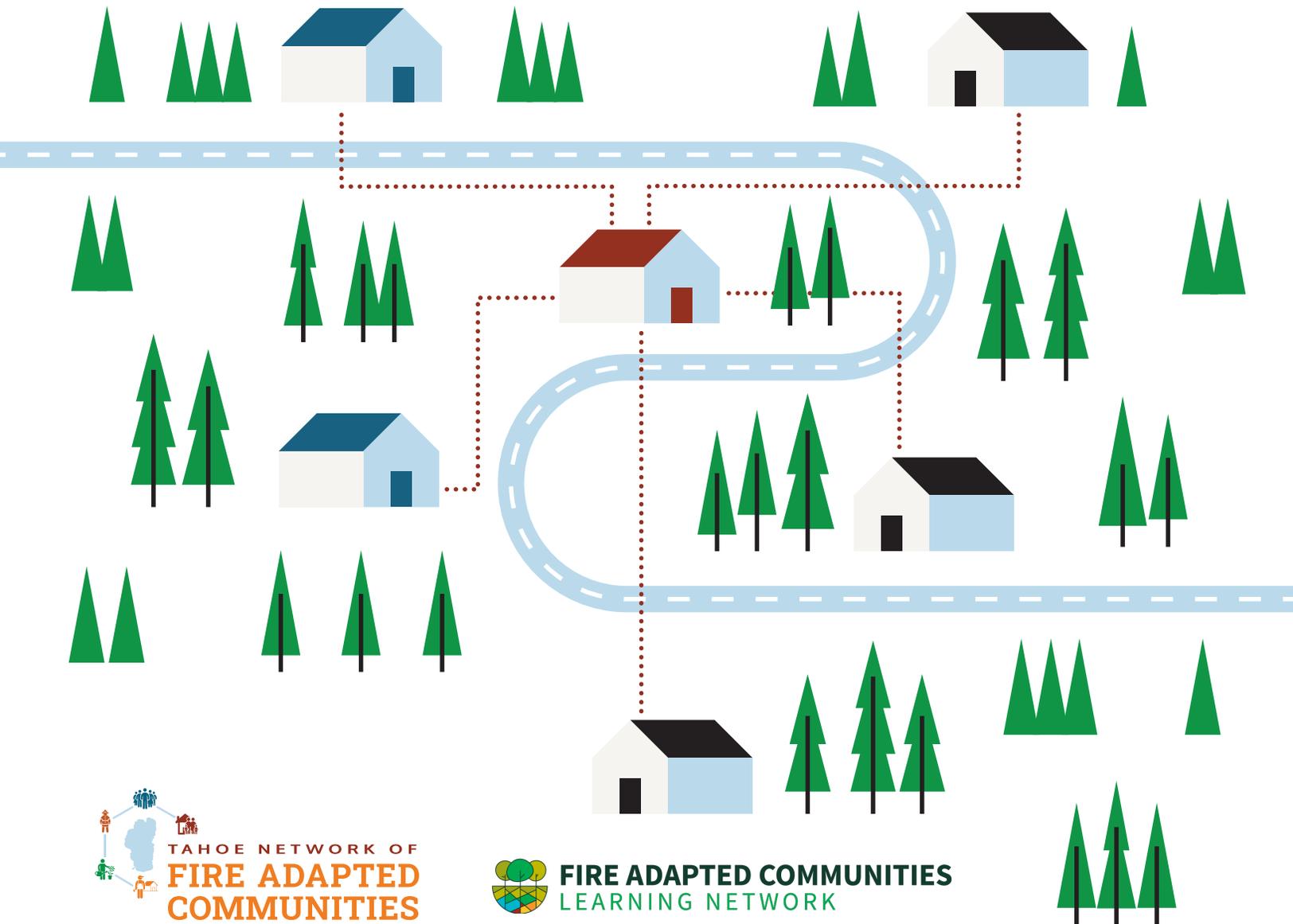


# PREPARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD FOR WILDFIRE



TAHOE NETWORK OF  
**FIRE ADAPTED  
COMMUNITIES**



**FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES**  
LEARNING NETWORK

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# THE TAHOE NETWORK OF FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES

Led by Tahoe Resource Conservation District and local fire districts/departments, the Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities (Tahoe Network) is a multi-agency program designed to help residents and visitors prepare for wildfire.

The mission of the Tahoe Network is to create basin-wide preparedness at Lake Tahoe by fostering neighborhoods that are self-sufficient, engaged, and sustainably adapted to living with wildfire.



**CONNECTS** residents to fire protection districts/departments and public land management agencies to provide defensible space and home hardening guidance.



**EDUCATES** residents through the Tahoe Living With Fire website, publications, and workshops.



**EMPOWERS** neighborhoods to work together with Neighborhood Leaders to prepare for wildfire.

# NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Wildfire preparedness is a team effort. As volunteers, Neighborhood Leaders mobilize their neighborhoods to collectively prepare for wildfire and become sustainably adapted to living in a fire-prone landscape.

Supported by program staff and fire personnel, Neighborhood Leaders can:

- **EDUCATE** their neighbors about defensible space and home hardening
- **HOST** neighborhood block parties and community work days
- **RECRUIT** other neighbors to be involved in the effort
- **COLLABORATE** with fire districts and other Lake Tahoe neighborhoods
- **APPLY** for Firewise USA® recognition

**TO BECOME A NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER** and receive support to spearhead wildfire preparedness efforts in your neighborhood, contact your local fire district/department or:

## **TAHOE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

### **Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator**

**E:** fire@tahoercd.org

**P:** (530) 543-1501 ext. 114

Once your application is complete, you will meet with the Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator to discuss expectations, delineate your neighborhood boundaries, and ask questions.

After the initial orientation, you will receive a *Neighborhood Leader Toolkit*, which includes a folder of available wildfire preparedness publications, a *40 Action Ideas For Neighborhood Leaders* sheet, and the *Neighborhood Leader Volunteer Commitment Form*.

Upon signing your Volunteer Commitment Form, the Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator will enter your neighborhood boundary into the Tahoe Network's Neighborhood Leader database, and your neighborhood will appear on the map as part of the Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities. Having your neighborhood in the database helps program staff connect you with other leaders and fire district personnel. View a map of current engaged neighborhoods at:

[www.tahoelivingwithfire.com/get-involved](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com/get-involved)

# NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER RESOURCES

## NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND GOAL-SETTING

Fire Adapted Communities program staff are here to help you think about your neighborhood's wildfire preparedness needs and assess your goals. This includes thinking about neighborhood organizational structure, whether or not you want to apply for Firewise USA® recognition, and what efforts might yield the best results for your neighborhood.

## NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

As an active Neighborhood Leader, you will receive exclusive access to workshops and trainings to help you increase your neighborhood's capacity. Workshops vary year-to-year depending on neighborhood needs.

Examples include:

- ▶ Neighborhood Leader Orientation
- ▶ Home Ignition and Defensible Space Workshop
- ▶ Community Engagement Workshop
- ▶ Firewise USA® and Fire Adapted Communities workshop

## NEIGHBORHOOD EVENT SUPPORT

Neighborhood events and workdays can be one of the best ways to engage your neighbors. Fire Adapted Communities program staff can support events by connecting you with fire district/department or land management agency personnel, providing you with publications and evacuation Go-Bags to give out, and providing a Tahoe Network information booth at your event depending on capacity and availability.

## TAHOE LIVING WITH FIRE

Neighborhood Leaders have access to numerous educational resources on the Tahoe Living With Fire website: [www.tahoelivingwithfire.com](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com). Here, you can learn how to prepare for wildfire, find up-to-date information about local prescribed fire projects, and stay informed of wildfire-related news and events.

Additionally, on the Tahoe Living With Fire website, you can access the *Neighborhood Leader Library*, which includes digital publications about defensible space, home hardening, evacuation, and more. Some of these publications are available in print to distribute to your neighbors or at community events. **Contact the Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator at [fire@tahoercd.org](mailto:fire@tahoercd.org) | (530) 541-1501 ext. 114 to find out what is available for distribution.**

Leaders are encouraged to follow and share posts from [@tahoelwf](https://www.facebook.com/tahoelwf) on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

## LOCAL FIRE DISTRICTS

Neighborhood Leaders should be well-connected to their local fire districts / departments. Local fire districts / departments may provide defensible space inspections, curbside chipping, and are vital resources for Firewise USA® applications, Firewise USA® community risk assessments and neighborhood events, depending on fire district / department availability and capacity. Additionally, fire districts / departments may be able to issue TRPA tree removal permits for trees larger than 14 inches in diameter that have been deemed a fire hazard. All other tree removal permits need to be issued by the TRPA forester (insect-diseased trees, etc.)

Contact your fire district/department using the information below. View your fire districts/department's website to schedule a defensible space inspection and/or chipping service, and share this information with your neighbors.



# POTENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER ROLES

As a Neighborhood Leader, you can take a variety of actions to prepare your neighborhood for wildfire. The Tahoe Network welcomes any level of commitment, and your neighborhood efforts can be as big or as small as you need them to be. As you start to recruit other neighbors to help with your efforts, you may consider delegating tasks to those who are interested.

Volunteering is split into three categories: neighborhood communication and education, neighborhood preparedness, and community event planning.

## NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

- Distribute educational materials, such as evacuation Go-Bags and fire preparedness brochures, to your neighbors and community groups.
- Inform your neighbors about the threat of wildfire at Lake Tahoe and direct them to the [www.tahoelivingwithfire.com](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com) website.
- Disperse information about defensible space inspections and chipping services.
- Place a Lake Tahoe Wildfire Awareness Month banner in a visible location in your neighborhood.
- Advertise Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities workshops and events.
- Collect neighbor contact information and create a neighborhood email database.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PREPAREDNESS

- Apply to become a recognized Firewise USA® site.
- Team up with a service, youth, or religious group to help low income, disabled, or elderly neighbors to prepare for wildfire.
- Prepare an evacuation plan with neighbors.
- Coordinate an evacuation drill with your local fire protection district and local law enforcement.
- Be an example of a home site where good defensible space has been created.
- Work with neighbors to ensure their addresses and street signs are visible.

## COMMUNITY EVENT PLANNING

- Plan a wildfire preparedness block party.
- Organize a defensible space neighborhood work day.
- Organize a tour of homes with exceptional defensible space and home hardening.
- Invite wildfire experts to your neighborhood to present on preparing for wildfire, fire season predictions, forest health, evacuation planning, etc.

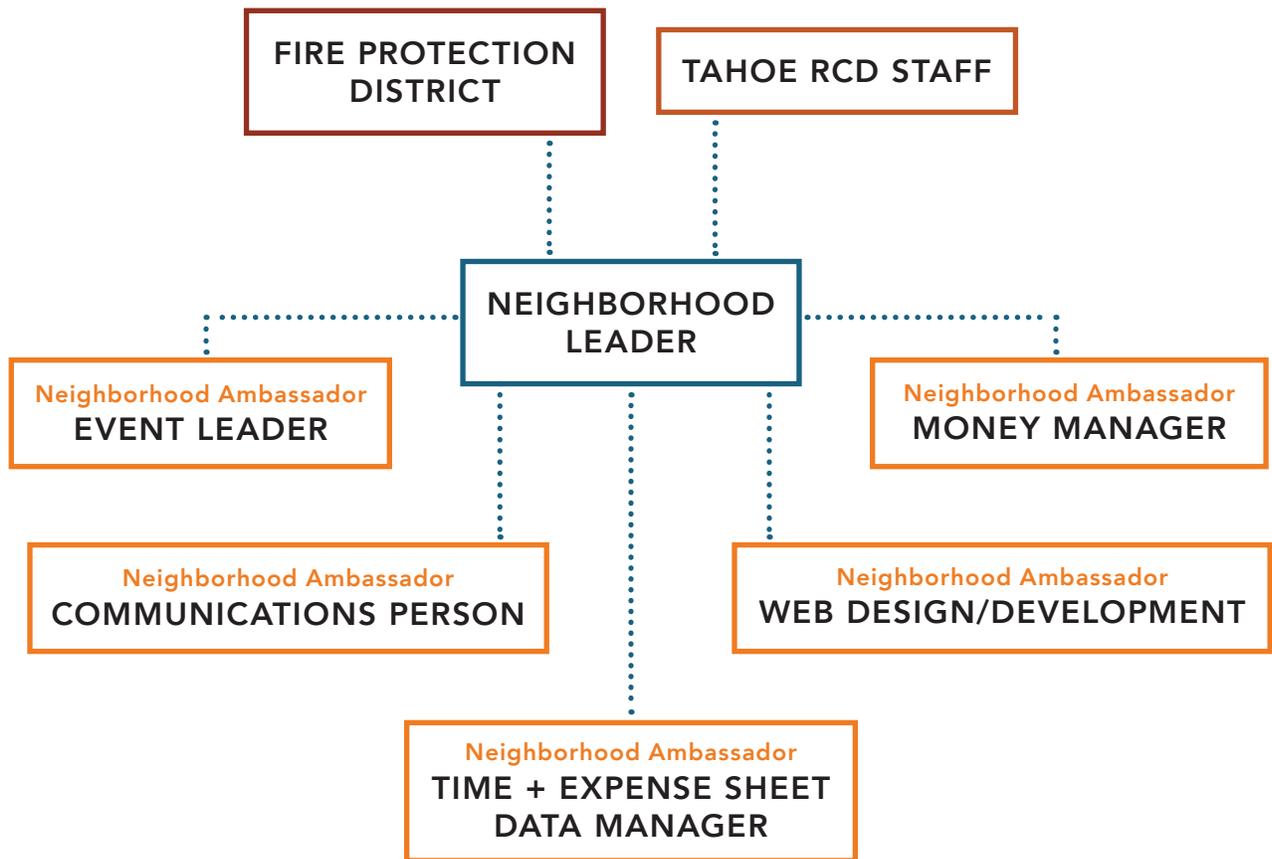
View the *40 Actions for Neighborhood Leaders* sheet (found in your Neighborhood Leader Toolkit) for a complete list of potential Neighborhood Leader activities.

# NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Preparing for wildfire is a group effort, and collective action is more effective than acting alone. Your neighborhood efforts can be as small or as big as you need them to be. However, if you want to go big, recruiting others will be key.

As your wildfire preparedness efforts get more robust, you may need help reaching additional neighbors, passing out flyers, distributing educational materials, organizing events, recording Firewise USA® tracking metrics, and even applying for grants.

Consider the following chart as an example neighborhood organizational structure:



Keep in mind that this is just one example. Every neighborhood is different and contains neighbors with different skill sets and expertise—don't be afraid to find them!

# ENGAGE YOUR NEIGHBORS

Tahoe Network Neighborhood Leaders are encouraged to build positive relationships with their neighbors and friends with the goal of collectively preparing for wildfire. You can start by simply introducing yourself during neighborhood walks and chatting about your concern for wildfire.

## HOW TO TALK TO NEIGHBORS ABOUT:

### DEFENSIBLE SPACE AND HOME HARDENING

Wildfire risk is shared across property boundaries, and your defensible space and home hardening efforts are only as good as your neighbors. Here are some ideas for talking to your neighbors about defensible space and home hardening:

1. When the timing feels appropriate, approach your neighbor in a friendly manner and open a casual dialog about wildfire and the benefits of defensible space to the neighborhood. Make an earnest expression of your concerns as they relate to your property and mention the work you've done to prepare.
2. If they are interested, provide your neighbor with some of our free defensible space and home hardening publications from your *Neighborhood Leader Toolkit*.
3. Explain how they can request a defensible space inspection from their local fire district/department and how to access chipping services.
4. Gauge your neighbor's response. If you sense resistance or if they seem hostile, don't push it. Leave the information with them and let it go for now. Follow up in a few weeks to see if they've read the material.
5. If you live in a Homeowners Association, Neighborhood Association or General Improvement District, consider inviting someone from your local fire protection district/department to speak at your next meeting on wildfire preparedness and steps that your community can take to help mitigate hazard.
6. If you have serious concerns about a neighbor who is unwilling to engage, you may request a defensible space inspection for your property and ask the fire district/department representative to inspect your neighbor's property while they are there.

## HOW TO TALK TO NEIGHBORS ABOUT: EVACUATION PREPAREDNESS

Those who have experienced the Angora and Caldor fires know that evacuation is stressful, scary, and easier when prepared for ahead of time. Consider talking with your neighbors about how they can prepare for a potential evacuation.

1. When the timing feels appropriate, approach your neighbor in a friendly manner and open a casual dialog about wildfire and how you have prepared for evacuation.
2. Mention to your neighbor that they can sign up for county emergency alerts online and provide them with the links from your *Neighborhood Leader Toolkit*. Consider showing them how to sign up on their phones.
3. If they're interested, provide your neighbor with one of our free evacuation Go-Bags and explain what they should pack.
4. If you are both willing, exchange contact information and discuss how you could help each other during a potential evacuation.
5. Identify which neighbors may need additional evacuation assistance, such as the elderly and disabled, and pass this information on to your local fire protection district/department with their consent.

## HOW TO TALK TO NEIGHBORS ABOUT: FUEL REDUCTION AND PRESCRIBED FIRE

Prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects are vital for restoring healthy forest ecosystems and reducing the threat of wildfire at Lake Tahoe. It's important that your neighbors are aware of and on-board with these projects.

1. Stay up-to-date with Lake Tahoe prescribed fire operations and make your neighbors aware of them. Inform your neighbors that they can view a map of planned and ongoing prescribed fire and fuel reduction projects at [www.tahoelivingwithfire.com](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com) and that they can join the prescribed fire notification list by contacting [sm.fs.paltbmu@usda.gov](mailto:sm.fs.paltbmu@usda.gov).
2. Be an advocate for prescribed fire and fuel reduction. If the topic comes up, kindly remind your neighbors of the benefits of prescribed fire and restoring healthy forest ecosystems. You can learn more about prescribed fire at Lake Tahoe in the **Neighborhood Leader Library** here.
3. If your community is experiencing smoke from a prescribed fire, let your neighbors know what project it's from and that prescribed fire smoke is generally much less severe than smoke from a wildfire. If your neighbor is concerned about the health impacts of smoke, share resources that help them to reduce their exposure.

## **HOW TO TALK TO NEIGHBORS ABOUT: FIRE PREVENTION**

Living in a fire-prone landscape comes with responsibilities. It's important that your neighbors understand wildfire risk in the area and know how to prevent wildfires.

1. Kindly remind your neighbors of your local fire protection district's/department's seasonal fire restrictions.
2. Stay up-to-date on Red Flag Warnings and kindly remind your neighbors of the extra risks and restrictions during Red Flag Warning events.
3. If you have your neighbors' email addresses, consider sending email blasts when seasonal fire restrictions are announced and during Red Flag Warning events.

## **ENGAGING SECOND HOMEOWNERS AND PART-TIME RESIDENTS**

Whether they are vacant lots, vacation rentals, inherited family cabins, or weekend get-aways, second homes populate many Lake Tahoe neighborhoods and communities.

Second homeowners and part-time residents are important members of our community and should be made aware of actions the neighborhood is taking to prepare for wildfire. Although it can be challenging, engaging with second homeowners in your neighborhood is crucial to developing Fire Adapted Communities.

Be sure to include second homeowners, part-time residents, and vacation rental managers in your neighborhood communications, event invites, and wildfire preparedness efforts. If you are unable to contact the owner of a second home or vacation rental in your neighborhood, reach out to your county and obtain their primary mailing address. Consider sending them a friendly letter to inform them of your neighborhood's wildfire preparedness efforts and how they can get involved.

**SAMPLE LETTER: GETTING STARTED AND ENGAGING NEIGHBORS**

Dear Neighbors,

Welcome to the neighborhood! We are sending this letter to invite you to connect with the neighborhood and provide you with information on how to prepare for wildfire at [www.tahoelivingwithfire.com](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com). The website has information on how to sign up for emergency notification systems, how to prepare a Go-Bag, and much more.

The organization of our neighborhood began on [date], the day that we had a home fire in the neighborhood. Our Fire Chief was on the scene, and he called us to action and asked us to come together and work with our neighbors to become fire aware and to prepare for an emergency evacuation fire drill [insert your own example / reason for organizing].

We started working right away, going door-to-door in our neighborhood, meeting neighbors, establishing a neighborhood team, street coordinators for each street, and creating a neighborhood website.

We would like to invite you to share your information so that we can contact you for future events, announcements, and provide useful information. Your information will only be used for neighborhood safety purposes.

Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle: Full-time Resident    Second Home Resident    Vacation Home Rental

If a second home, your mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

If a vacation home rental, property management company \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons who occupy your home \_\_\_\_\_

Special Assistance or needs \_\_\_\_\_ (you can use the back side of this paper)

Contact numbers \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to [your name] at [your email] or [your address]. Your team members thank you!

# FIREWISE AND FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES

What is the difference between Fire Adapted Communities and Firewise USA®? Put simply, Fire Adapted Communities is a *concept* while Firewise USA® is a *tool*.

Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) is a holistic and adaptive framework to help communities better coexist with wildfire, and the *Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities* is the collaboration of agencies, fire districts, and communities in the Lake Tahoe Basin doing just that. Fire Adapted Communities is not a one-size fits all approach, a checklist, or a specific set of actions a community must take. There is no FAC “end point” as communities change, fuels grow, and residents move into and out of neighborhoods. Rather, Fire Adapted Communities are communities that are informed, prepared, and collaboratively taking action to live with wildfire.

Focused on residential action at the parcel scale, the Firewise USA® program is an important piece of the wildfire adaptation puzzle (see graphic below). Under the National Fire Protection Association, Firewise USA® is a nationwide program that recognizes communities who are actively preparing for wildfire. Firewise USA® recognition can provide many benefits to your neighborhood such as neighborhood camaraderie, an outlined pathway to preparedness, and potential homeowner insurance benefits.

As demonstrated by the graphic below, the Firewise USA® recognition program is one of the many facets of wildfire preparedness under the Fire Adapted Communities framework. Any neighborhoods actively involved in one or more of the activities on the graphic are applying Fire Adapted Communities concepts and living under the FAC model. As it is one of the many FAC tools, some Neighborhood Leaders may use the national Firewise USA® program to organize their neighborhood, spur motivation, and achieve national Firewise USA® recognition as part of the neighborhood's Fire Adapted Communities journey. You may reference the graphic below to help conceptualize where Firewise USA® fits into the Fire Adapted Communities framework and ponder the many other facets and tools available as well.



# HOW TO APPLY FOR FIREWISE USA® RECOGNITION

Applying for Firewise USA® recognition is a big undertaking, but it is readily achievable. Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities program staff are happy to support Firewise USA® applications by connecting Neighborhood Leaders with fire district/department personnel, supporting neighborhood outreach events, and walking Neighborhood Leaders through the application process.

- Step 1 GET ORGANIZED:** Pull together a small group of 3–5 neighbors and form a neighborhood Firewise Committee.
- Step 2 OBTAIN A COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT:** Contact your local fire district/department (page 4) to schedule a community wildfire risk assessment. The risk assessment is a neighborhood-wide view that identifies areas of successful wildfire risk reduction and areas where improvements could be made. The assessment can address every parcel in the neighborhood or a 20% randomly-selected subset of parcels. Emphasis should be on the general condition of homes and related home-ignition-zones (HIZs). The assessment is a living document and will need to be updated at a minimum of every five years.
- Step 3 DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN:** Develop a three-year action plan with your Firewise Committee. This should be a prioritized list of risk reduction projects and investments for the neighborhood, along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually or over a period of multiple years. Action plans should be updated at a minimum of at least every three years.
- Step 4 EDUCATE YOUR NEIGHBORS:** Host at least one wildfire preparedness educational outreach event for your neighborhood per year. This could be a block party, evacuation drill, barbeque, etc. These efforts will go towards your site's annual wildfire risk reduction investment.
- Step 5 INVEST IN WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION:** Track yours and your neighbors' invested time and money annually with Firewise USA® volunteer time and expense sheets. At a minimum, each site is required to annually invest the equivalent of one volunteer hour per dwelling unit in wildfire risk reduction actions. If your site has identified 100 homes within its boundary, then 100 hours of work or the monetary time equivalent, based on the independent sector value of volunteer time, need to be completed for that year.
- Step 6 SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION:** Once the above criteria have been completed, submit your application. Hooray!

**Step 7 RENEW YOUR APPLICATION EACH YEAR:** The work of a Firewise USA® community is never done. To maintain active status in the program, you must continue the work throughout the year and document all activities, including your education/outreach event, the hours involved, and the volunteers. The information is easy to report through the Firewise USA® website portal.

**Step 8 CELEBRATE SUCCESS:** Don't forget to celebrate your progress! Share your story with Tahoe Network program staff so we can highlight your recognition and success.

## SAMPLE LETTER: FIREWISE USA® APPLICATION



Greetings Neighbors!

You are receiving this letter because you are a resident or homeowner in [your neighborhood].

For the safety of our neighborhood, a group of neighborhood volunteers will be working this year to attain Firewise USA® recognition. The Firewise USA® program was established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in order to involve homeowners in taking individual responsibility for preparing their homes for wildfire, encourage neighborhood collaboration, and provide resources to get it all done.

Several Tahoe neighborhoods have already received recognition (including Golden Bear, Cold Creek Trail, and Al Tahoe) and in some cases are benefiting from renewed insurance policies, reduced rates, and rebates.

To obtain our Firewise USA® recognition, we need the participation of as many homes as possible.

**So .... what's next? Here's what you can do to help us obtain recognition:**

1. Please e-mail [your email] advising of your willingness to participate. Include your name, physical address, mailing address, e-mail address and phone number. If you have any special needs that we should know about during an emergency evacuation, please let us know so that we can pass this on to the fire district.
2. Request a defensible space inspection from [your local fire district / department]. After receiving your defensible space inspection, do the required work and log the time spent.
3. If you received a "No Violations Observed" on your inspection form, *congratulations!* If there were items on your inspection that needed to be completed, request a follow-up inspection from [your local fire district] once your work is done.
4. Join us for the workday on [dates], which will include a neighborhood barbeque and several other agencies who can provide further information regarding this process. More information to follow!

If you have any questions of your committee members, please contact [your name] at [your email/number].

The [your neighborhood] Firewise USA® Committee

# NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER FAQs

## **What is the time commitment required to be a Neighborhood Leader?**

There is no required time commitment—all levels of involvement are welcome.

## **I don't know anyone who is willing to help. Can I be a Neighborhood Leader and organize wildfire preparedness efforts in my neighborhood by myself?**

Absolutely. Neighborhood Leaders are encouraged to do as much as they can depending on their time and capacity. This may be as small as distributing Go-Bags and educational brochures to your neighbors or as big as organizing a community workday. However, the more help, the better. If you have big ideas in mind, recruiting other helpers will be key.

## **What is the difference between a Firewise USA® neighborhood and a Fire Adapted Community?**

See pages 11 and 12.

## **How big/small can my neighborhood be to apply for Firewise USA® recognition?**

NFPA requires neighborhoods to have a minimum of 8 dwelling units and a maximum of 2,500 dwelling units to apply for Firewise USA® recognition.

## **Does the Tahoe Network of Fire Adapted Communities have funds for Neighborhood Leaders to access?**

At this time, the Tahoe Network does not have any funding opportunities for neighborhoods. Neighborhood Leaders and their committees are encouraged to form a 501c3 non-profit and apply for grants on their own. Contact the Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator to learn about grant opportunities at [fire@tahoercd.org](mailto:fire@tahoercd.org) | (530) 541-1501 ext. 114.

## **How do I obtain educational materials to distribute to my neighbors?**

Contact the Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator at [fire@tahoercd.org](mailto:fire@tahoercd.org) | (530) 541-1501 ext. 114.