

## Fire Adapted Communities FAQs

### 1. How do I get started?

- a. Contact the Tahoe Resource Conservation District by email at [fire@tahoercd.org](mailto:fire@tahoercd.org). The Regional Coordinator will provide an overview of the program, outline next steps, and connect you with current Fire Adapted Community Leaders if desired. They are there to support you and answer your questions. To move on in the process and receive all the available resources you must meet in person with Tahoe RCD and your fire district.

### 2. What do I have to do as a leader?

- a. With help from your committee, you will organize your neighborhood's annual workday, submit your Firewise renewal application, and attend workshops and educational events hosted by the Fire Adapted Community Program. You will be the main contact for people in your neighborhood to ask questions about defensible space, home hardening, and other wildfire prevention topics.

### 3. How many people should be on my committee, or can I do this alone?

- a. We recommend 3-5 people on your committee, including yourself. Your committee members should be engaged and ready to begin organizing your neighborhood. You cannot do this on your own.

### 4. What is the time commitment?

- a. After establishing your FAC, the time commitment for leaders decreases. Expect to spend a handful of hours each year organizing the annual workday, gathering contact information, and submitting your Firewise renewal application.

### 5. How long does the process take and how many hours per week?



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- a. The process depends on the neighborhood. If your committee is organized and motivated, the entire process of becoming Fire Adapted and Firewise can take 4-6 weeks to a couple of months. As you establish your FAC, expect to spend about 1-2 hours a week on related work, from doing the Risk Assessment to canvassing your neighborhood to organizing the workday.

### 6. How many people in my neighborhood need to be involved and what if they don't all participate?

- a. As you set up your Fire Adapted Community, aim to collect 20% of your neighborhood's contact information. For each year following, try to collect another 10-20% of your neighborhood's contact information and continue increasing involvement in the program. Some of the older groups in the basin have collected 75-95% of their neighborhood's contact information across 4-5 years so the process takes time.
- b. Please do not expect 100% participation in your first year. Don't allow low involvement to hold you back when you are just starting. This will grow year after year.

### 7. How do I engage my neighbors?

- a. Engaging your neighbors can be a daunting task as you establish your FAC. Talk to neighbors about the program while you are out on walks. Utilize neighborhood events like barbecues or block parties to advertise the program or upcoming workdays. And after handing out flyers in the neighborhood, host an exciting workday – invite personnel from your local fire district or Tahoe RCD to give informational talks or demonstrate a defensible space inspection day of. Publications and flyers are available.

### 8. How do I collect contact details?



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- a. There are several different ways you can collect residents' contact information. Some groups create flyers with QR codes that link to a Google Form for address, email, and phone number collection. Other groups create a spreadsheet and fill in information as they meet with residents. Examples are available.
- b. The Tahoe RCD and fire district are unable to provide you with contact details due to privacy

### 9. What support do I have from Tahoe RCD/fire districts?

- a. As you begin forming your committee and Fire Adapted Community, you will meet with staff from the Tahoe RCD and your local district. A fire district representative will assist you with your Risk Assessment where you assess 20% of houses in your community on a variety of defensible space and home hardening criteria. The Tahoe RCD and fire district will also support you in your workday, community meetings, education, and action plans.

### 10. Do I have to create my own flyer, contact forms, volunteer hour sheets, emails/letters?

- a. The Tahoe RCD has created samples and has examples from other groups that you can use for your own neighborhood. You're welcome to create your own materials or adapt the pre-existing ones as you would like. Many groups like to create their own materials as this allows different people to connect, bond and begin working as a team. You can visit [www.tahoelivingwithfire.com](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com) and find samples and examples in the Neighborhood Leader Library.

### 11. How do I organize my community?

- a. Follow the HOA template



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### 12. How do I learn more and educate myself about defensible space, home hardening, evacuation?

- a. You can visit [www.tahoelivingwithfire.com](http://www.tahoelivingwithfire.com) and find information on defensible space, home hardening, evacuation alerts, and more. This is our key source for all new groups. There is additional information elsewhere, but when starting out, everything you need to know is on our website.

### 13. How do I connect with other leaders?

- a. The Regional Coordinator/Tahoe RCD can put you in contact with leaders in your area. Meetings and educational events are organized throughout the year to reconnect leaders around the lake.

### 14. Are educational opportunities available to me?

- a. Tahoe Living with Fire/Tahoe RCD and Living with Fire hosts webinars throughout the year that are advertised on our social media and website. They also provide workshops. You can view recordings on our YouTube, Tahoe Living with Fire.

### 15. How does Tahoe RCD/fire districts help with insurance?

- a. Becoming Firewise may impact your insurance. The California FAIR Plan requires brokers to provide discounts for homeowners who have done their defensible space, home hardening, and live in a Firewise neighborhood. The Firewise certificate for your insurance is posted and downloadable from your Firewise account. You are responsible for sharing this with your neighborhood.
- b. Some insurance agencies are requiring their policyholders to provide proof of defensible space or wildfire prevention measures. You can get a free defensible space inspection from your local fire department, and you can send your final report to your insurance agency. Your fire department will never send your information to an insurance agency.



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- c. Tahoe RCD can assist with minor insurance issues but the time they can commit to this is limited. Please see our California FAIR Plan Insurance Guide and our Insurance one-pager.

### 16. Will Tahoe RCD/fire districts provide me with all the information that I need?

- a. No. The Firewise USA program is intended to give you and your neighbors the grass-roots framework for organizing yourselves to reduce risk. The Tahoe RCD and your fire district are available to assist you and guide you through the Firewise USA Application process. Please keep us informed of your progress or request support with questions you are unable to answer. Your Firewise committee should be able to start the assessment and application process on their own.

### 17. How do you respond to a community member who thinks becoming fire adapted is futile?

- a. Use data to show the importance of defensible space and home hardening during wildfires. A 2025 [study](#) from Nature Communications titled “Fire risk to structures in California’s Wildland-Urban Interface” showed that houses that had undertaken home hardening sections and defensible space maintenance have the highest chance of survival.
- b. As more studies appear, this document will be updated with links.

### 18. How do you respond to a community member who says they do not have the money to do the work?

- a. Provide the community member with actions they can take that do not cost money or are lower cost, like raking pine needles, moving combustible items away from your house, replacing their vents with 1/8-inch metal mesh screening, and signing up for emergency alerts.



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### 19. How do you respond to a community member who believes they shouldn't be doing work if the CTC and USFS isn't keeping up with their lots?

- a. The CTC and USFS inspect and work on their lots on a cyclical basis. However, their focus is on larger vegetative removal, like trees and overgrown shrubs. It is your responsibility to maintain 100 feet of your defensible space out from your structure. If that 100 feet extends onto a CTC or USFS lot, you can enter into a stewardship agreement with the agency and do the activities stated in the agreement (limbing trees, raking pine needles, creating a mosaic of shrubs, etc.).

