

## How to Create a Firewise Community

Nevada County has a strong Firewise Community (FWC) program. With this interest and history, and particularly with the dissolution of the Banner Mountain Firewise Community, many area residents may wonder how their neighborhood will be affected and how to join or become a new FWC.

The **Fire Safe Council of Nevada County** has been helping neighborhoods form and sustain FWCs for more than 16 years. Our team includes experienced advisors who can guide you every step of the way.

While there is some paperwork and a few requirements, forming a FWC is both rewarding and empowering and doesn't have to be complicated. It strengthens neighborhoods, builds connections, and makes residents and their homes safer. Please give us a call and we will explain the process and get you started (530) 446-1224.

Jamie Jones  
Executive Director of the Fire Safe Council

### The Purpose of a Firewise Community (FWC)

A FWC brings neighbors together to reduce the risk and intensity of wildfire within a defined area. Just as importantly, it fosters communication, shared responsibility, and education—so residents can respond quickly and effectively during emergencies or evacuations.

### How to Become a Firewise Community

#### 1. Gather Neighbors and Explore the Idea

Start by talking with your neighbors about the benefits of becoming a FWC. These include:

- Reducing wildfire risk
- Protecting lives of residents and pets
- Protecting and potentially enhancing property values
- Helping maintain or improve access to fire insurance/or getting a discount from your company
- Building stronger neighborhood connections

Then review available Firewise materials and discuss whether your area is a good fit. This is the stage to think about forming a committee to complete the remainder of the process.

#### 2. Create a Draft Boundary

Define a preliminary boundary for your FWC. A community can be as small as eight residences and as large as 2,500. When determining boundaries, consider:

- **Traffic patterns:** Do neighbors enter and exit the area the same way? Do roadways define your neighborhood?
- **Who is interested in participating:** Not every resident needs to be involved at first, but those with a strong interest may play a bigger role in creating the group.
- **Communication:** Is there already a neighborhood organization established - like a road association or even a neighborhood contact list? Will there be ways to coordinate with all neighbors in the area? If no formal or informal organization currently exists, can one be created after your neighborhood becomes certified?

Using online or printed maps, draw a rough boundary of the homes that would be included. This can be revised as neighbors become more familiar with the process and want to opt in.

### **3. Contact the Fire Safe Council - 530-466-1224**

Once you have a group of interested neighbors and a draft boundary, contact the Fire Safe Council. They will help you with next steps, including arranging for a wildfire risk assessment which is necessary for applying.

### **4. Conduct a Wildfire Risk Assessment - conducted by the Fire Safe Council**

The risk assessment will include several things including:

- Wildfire threat to homes and other structures
- Vegetation in and around the homes
- Possible evacuation routes
- Recommendations for reducing risk

This assessment becomes the foundation for your planning efforts.

### **5. Develop a Three-Year Action Plan**

Based on the assessment, your group will create a three-year action plan that identifies and prioritizes wildfire risk reduction strategies. This may include:

- Reducing flammable vegetation near homes
- Improving access and evacuation routes
- Strengthening neighborhood communication systems
- Providing education on living safely in wildfire-prone areas

### **6. Implement and Track Progress**

Begin carrying out your action plan and tracking your accomplishments. Every year you will report progress in terms of time and money spent carrying out your plan.

### **Neighbors Helping Neighbors!**

Creating a Firewise community is about neighbors helping neighbors. It builds resilience, strengthens relationships, and ensures that your community is better prepared for whatever wildfire season may bring. The Fire Safe Council is with you every step of the way. Don't hesitate to call for advice!