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FIREWISE Newsletter

MAKING SENSIBLE CHOICES IN THE INTERFACE

2009

CREATE A FIREWISE SUMMER CAMP



Created and sponsored by Firewise Communities®, YMCA Camp Orkila and Washington State University Master Gardeners worked together to create a curriculum designed for day campers of middle-school age. It's goal is to increase the understanding of wildfire among young adults and empower them to

implement Firewise® practices around their homes and in their communities. Now the tools to create your own local Firewise Camp are being made available to you.

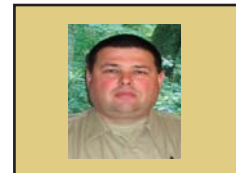
From the newly-constructed Firewise Fire Camp web site www.firewise.org/fire-camp it allows you to download the curriculum to learn what you'll need to prepare and conduct a one- or two-week day camp that will lead your campers on a path to discovery of the many facets of wildfire. A downloadable certificate is also available to provide your campers at the successful conclusion of the session. Visit the Firewise Catalog www.firewise.org/catalog to order supporting materials for the cost of shipping and handling, or to purchase low-cost items as prizes for campers.



29 Homes Destroyed in Bastrop, TX Wildfire
PAGE TWO



Firewise Work Week in Buffalo Gap, Texas
PAGE TWO



Matt Simpson New Firewise Coordinator for Arkansas
PAGE THREE



Report from Forest and Rural Committee of the NFPA
PAGE FOUR

SPRING IS HERE TAKE AN ONLINE LANDSCAPE COURSE

The Firewise Learning Center courses cover a range of wildfire safety topics for audiences including homeowners, forestry professionals, and firefighters. Course design and length varies, but all courses are structured to allow you to learn at your own pace. Once you have

See Course cont. on Page 4



[We welcome your comments!](#)

BASTROP TEXAS STRUCK BY EARLY SEASON WILDFIRE

The community of Bastrop Texas was the site on an early season wildfire fire where 29 homes, 12 businesses and 13 other buildings were destroyed. The Wilderness Ridge Fire consumed some 1200-acres and was driven by strong winds and burned along pine debris towards residential development of wood framed dwelling and manufacture homes. P.J. Pearson of the Texas Forest Service stated, "The remaining homes had a very common theme-defensible space. Those destroyed were built at the head of draws and on the tops of the slopes with no set back. In these cases construction type had nothing to do with the loss. Site built, mobile, wood frame and exterior, solid foundation, pier and beam--it was simply a poor location for protection of property from wildfire." Some residents were evacuated and firefighters were credited with saving up over 425 homes. The fire believed to have been caused by a downed power line did not cause any injuries or deaths.



BUFFALO GAP, TEXAS - FIREWISE WORK WEEK

Buffalo Gap is a small community located 12 miles Southwest of Abilene, Texas. Population of the town is about 400 people, but 400 people with very large hearts and the knowledge of what fire can do to a community. In 2007, youngsters had a camp fire and did everything they were taught to do including; a fire ring and clearing the area. The one thing they didn't learn was not to build a fire on a windy day. Embers from the camp fire ignited brush and spreading nearly into town luckily did not destroy any structures.

The event open the eyes of quite a few people in town and questions were asked—what can we do? The town is a National Tree City and the tree board became the Firewise board, clean up began, and existing homes were made into Firewise homes. The

town applied for recognition as a Firewise community in 2008 and the dedication was held.

Now the story begins. Help was needed to do some major mitigation work in the community this year. Trees needed pruning,



fuel break needed to be created, and the area along the river was very overgrown and it needed clean up to prevent a wildfire from crossing it. The community pitched in again with help the Texas Forest Service

and a very willing to work crew called ALERT (Air Land Emergency Response Team.) The team comprised of 25 young men ages 17-24 that are trained in saw work, diving, firefighting, and other various forms of emergency response were perfect for the job. Ten additional men from the corrections center gave the town a total of 50 heavy duty workers for cutting and pruning trees and mowing brush. The work lasted three days and fuel breaks were established throughout the area.

The town supported the "troops" by providing housing and food. Residents of the town also turned out to haul brush and limbs to a selected area for burning when conditions permit. Buffalo Gap is definitely a community that is practicing Firewise principals in the community.





SIMPSON NAMED NEW ARKANSAS FIREWISE COORDINATOR



Arkansas Firewise is pleased to welcome Matt Simpson as its new Firewise Coordinator. Simpson has a long list of accomplishments and has been a firm supporter of Firewise, bringing in the communities of Diamondhead, Lake Hamilton, and Red Oak.

Matt Simpson, also the Lake Hamilton Fire Chief, is a International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) certified Firefighter II, Fire Officer II and Instructor I; a certified Building Official by the International Code Council; and is a National Registry Emergency Medical Technician – Basic. Simpson was also a former state plumbing inspector and is a master plumber. His last three years have been spent as the Rookie School instructor at the Arkansas Fire Academy in Camden at Southern Arkansas University Tech. Simpson himself, however, is no rookie and has completed the Chief Fire Officer Program. It is easy to see he is following in the footsteps of his firefighting grandfathers.

Ready to also take on the task of Firewise Coordinator, Simpson said he hopes to see the program continue to flourish. "I know I have a big job in continuing the legacy of David Samuel," he said, "I look forward to working with both AFC personnel and the fire service of Arkansas to continue the Firewise effort and expand the program."

Information about the Arkansas Firewise program can be found at www.arkansas-firewise.com.



STUDENTS HELP COMMUNITY MAINTAIN FWC/USA RECOGNITION

Early one Saturday morning about twenty students were "hanging" around the school in Etoile, Texas. Most students want to be any place but at school, let alone on a Saturday. These were special students, very special as they came to work in the community of Etoile to make the community more Firewise.

Their job for the day was to make three homes more Firewise and accomplished by raking up debris, picking up trash and hauling it all away. Planned by Jan Amen, UWI Specialist from the Lufkin area, the event was fantastic and went off without a hitch. John Boyette, Mark Kerr, and James Russell came over from Nacogdoches to lend heavy labor when needed; Karen Stafford was there to work with the students and help answer any questions they might have.

Teachers were also present to work with the students as this was considered a learning experience for students, property owners, and teachers as well. The event counted as the workday for the community and fulfilled the Firewise Communities/USA requirement to maintain current status as a nationally recognized Firewise Community/USA.

The community of Etoile is the first Firewise Community in the United States whose public school manages the wildfire mitigation work. Etoile's school Firewise Board members have established a goal of making homes and businesses more aware of wildfire and what can happen if a major fire occurs in the Piney Woods of East Texas.

The school's all-student Firewise Board directs the activities concerning Firewise projects in the community---quite an accomplishment! Gabrielle Newman, chair of the Firewise Board. "When we are done, we plan to make Etoile a safer community. As I graduate this year, I plan to take this program with me to Woden High School."



IBHS OFFERS HELPFUL INFO TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR HOME SAFE



The Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) conducted applied building science research relating to the Witch Creek Wildfire that devastated parts of San Diego County, Calif., in October 2007. The findings are available in the report Mega Fires: The Case for Mitigation, which is the first study to be published under the auspices of IBHS' new Insurance Center for Building Safety Research. While this research focused on California, it provides new data and findings that ultimately will help consumers everywhere better protect their homes against the ravages of wildfires. The report also led to the development of the California-centric Wildfire Home Assessment Checklist and Retrofit Guide, which are presently being used as models for the creation of similar guides for homeowners in all 38 states with wildfire exposure. They are available at www.DisasterSafety.org. We thank Candace Iskwowitz, Public Affairs Manager at IBHS, for providing this information. Be sure to visit www.DisasterSafety.org - where building science leads to real-world solutions.



Institute for Business & Home Safety®



Course cont. from Page 1

SPRING IS HERE TAKE AN ONLINE LANDSCAPE COURSE,

enrolled in a course, you can return to the Firewise Learning Center at any time to continue a course you have started or take a new course.

Courses:

- Firewise Landscaping (http://www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/learningcenter/course_info.htm#landscaping)
- Firefighter Safety in the Wildland/Urban Interface (http://www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/learningcenter/course_info.htm#firefighter)
- Water Training (http://www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/learningcenter/course_info.htm#water)

Firewise Landscaping is designed for people living in wildland areas who make decisions about landscaping their homes. The course considers the issues of appropriate landscape designs, specific planting and pruning alternatives, and appropriate planting materials for interface/intermix fire environments. It has three parts: an Overview; Design/Installation; and Maintenance. It also includes a virtual Firewise landscaping model you can use to visualize design alternatives. The course takes approximately three hours to complete.

Firefighter Safety in the Wildland/Urban Interface addresses problems faced by structural and wildland firefighters when fighting fires, especially those threatening structures in the wildland/urban interface. An important goal is to improve knowledge of firefighter safety and survival issues. The course has three parts: Understanding Fire Behavior in the WUI; Structure Protection Strategies in the WUI; and Firefighter Safety in the WUI. The entire course takes approximately four hours to complete.

Water Training is a comprehensive guide to using water effectively during firefighting operations in the wildland/urban interface. It is intended for all firefighters and provides the learner with important information and relevant examples to

help develop strategies to use water in the most effective manner. The course takes approximately four hours to complete.

Enroll in a course now. (http://www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/learningcenter/enroll.htm)



MY FIREWISE DESERVES A VISIT

Since it was posted on the Firewise Home Page in October 2008, 175 people have joined MyFirewise. The networking site allows you to connect to people with the same interest and share ideas about Firewise. If you have a community wildfire mitigation challenge you would like to discuss with others? This is the place to do it. All are invited to join. Simply go to www.firewise.org and click on MyFirewise.

WILDLAND FIRE SAFETY AWARENESS STUDY - 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY PROJECT

In 2008 marked the 10th anniversary of the release of the Wildland Fire Safety Awareness Study complete by TriData. This was a landmark safety study for the inter-agency wildland fire community helping to shape fire management direction during the past decade. Several of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) and the Safety and Health Working Team (SHWT) projects and initiatives came out of this study as did the formation of the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC).

To recognize this landmark study, the LLC has created the four video podcasts for wildland fire community viewing. These videos are short (3-7 minutes each), provide important background information, and we encourage you to take the time to view them all at: <http://wildfirelessons.net/Additional.aspx?Page=144>

- Video 1 – Introduction
- Video 2 – Successes
- Video 3 -- Continuing Challenges
- Video 4 – Looking to the Future

The SHWT and LLC would like to gather your feedback and recommendations for follow-up actions to this landmark study. The original Wildland Fire Safety Awareness Study/TriData Phase 3 Report is available for download at: <http://www.nifc.gov/safety/phaselll.htm>.

REPORT FROM NFPA FOREST AND RURAL COMMITTEE

The *Forest and Rural Committee* of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has the primary responsibility producing documents on fire protection for rural, suburban, forest, grass, brush, and tundra areas. This committee also has primary responsibility for documents on Class A foam and its utilization for all wildland and structural fire fighting. Excluding fixed fire protection systems.

Michele Steinberg, Firewise Communities Support Manager and NFPA Staff Liaison to the committee, reports "There is a lot happening with the committee, its documents, proposed documents and task groups." Steinberg goes to say, "Many of the documents currently being worked on by the committee members are open for public comment. We welcome peoples opinion on these documents and issues facing the committee."

To comment on any document please visit www.nfpa.org and click *Codes & Standards* then the pull down menu to *Code Development Process*. Here you can comment by submitting your thoughts online, via email, or download a document

See Rural cont. on Page 5



and mail it back.

Here are a few of the key upcoming committee agendas:

- 1) *Proposed NFPA 1151, Standard for Gels Used in Wildland and Structural Fire Fighting* – This proposed document is being developed to address gels used in wildland and structural fire fighting
- 2) *NFPA 1: Fire Code and NFPA 1141: Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas* – These standards cover the national fire code and the requirements for the fire protection infrastructure in suburban and rural areas where there is an intended change of land use or intended land development. A task group met in December to work on an adoptable annex to NFPA 1. The 2009 edition of NFPA 1 dropped the reference to NFPA 1141 and the group is working to reinstitute the reference making both documents stronger.
- 3) *NFPA 1150: Standard on Foam Chemicals for Fires in Class A Fuels* - This standard specifies requirements for foam and the chemicals used to produce foam that is used to control, suppress, or prevent fires in Class A fuels.
- 4) *NFPA 1145: Guide for the Use of Class A Foams in Manual Structural Fire Fighting* - This document presents fundamental information for agencies planning to use Class A foam for structural fire fighting and protection. It presents necessary and useful information on foam properties and characteristics, proportioning and discharge hardware, application techniques, and safety considerations.

If you have any questions about the Forest & Rural Committee or any of these documents please contact Michele Steinberg, Staff Liaison, Technical Committee on Forest & Rural Fire Protection, National Fire Protection Association, and (617) 984-7487 or via email msteinberg@nfpa.org.



CHANGES TO PAYMENT TO STATES

In October 2000, Congress passed Public Law 106-393 entitled "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000" which stabilized federal payments to states for funding schools and roads. The law commonly referred to as Payments to States replaces and fundamentally changes the way the Forest Service has been returning a portion of its annual receipts to jurisdictions falling within national forest boundaries ("the 25 percent fund"). Recent changes to the law allow the use of these funds to carry out Firewise Communities activities under title III. Although the deadline has passed for Fiscal Year 2008, funding for the program runs until 2011. Here are a few frequently asked questions regarding the program or visit the website www.fs.fed.us/srs for more information and to plan for next fiscal year funding.

To what extent may a county authorize a Fire Safe Council to use funds that it receives under title III of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 110-343, October 3, 2008)?

A Fire Safe Council may utilize funds received by a county under title III of the Secure Rural Schools Act to the extent the Council is implementing the Firewise Communities program or developing a community wildfire protection plan. Section 302(a) of title III of the current SRS Act specifies that a county that has allocated money for title III projects shall use the county funds as follows:

... in accordance with this title [III], only-

(1) to carry out activities under the Firewise Communities program to provide homeowners in fire-sensitive ecosystems education on, and assistance with implementing, techniques in home sitting, home construction, and home landscaping that can increase the protection of people and property from wildfires;

(2) to reimburse the participating county for search and rescue and other emergency services, including firefighting, that are-

(A) performed on Federal land after the date on which the use was approved under subsection (b);

(B) paid for by the participating county; and

(3) to develop community wildfire protection plans in coordination with the appropriate Secretary concerned." (emphasis added.)

Under section 302(a)(1), fire prevention activities are limited to those activities "under" the Firewise Communities program. This language requires a direct link to the Firewise Communities program, as opposed to more general language that, for instance, could have required activities to be "consistent with" or "in accordance with" the program. A community wildfire protection plan is defined in section 101(3) of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law No. 108-148, December 3, 2003), with specific content and a process for development.

Have the allowable expenditures under Title III for fire prevention and county planning activities been significantly narrowed?

Yes. Under title III of the original Act (P.L. 106-393), there were six authorized uses, one of which, fire prevention and county planning activities (sec. 302(b)(5)), was written very broadly, without reference to specific programs or plans.

A comparison of the current Secure Rural Schools Act (P.L. 110-343) to the original Act shows that a number of changes were made to the fire prevention and community planning uses of title III funds. In addition to replacing the general language describing fire prevention and planning efforts with specific references to the Firewise Communities program and community wildfire protection plans, the language authorizing efforts to educate homeowners about the "consequences of wildfires" is no longer included, and language that authorizes providing homeowners with "assistance with implementing" techniques in protecting people and property has been added.

The changes to the fire prevention and community planning uses indicate that Congress intended to authorize some different uses of title III funds for fire prevention and community planning.

See States cont. on Page 6



States from cont. Page 5

What activities may be carried out under the Firewise Communities program?

For the convenience of the reader, the Firewise Communities program has provided the following information regarding its activities:

The Firewise Communities program (www.firewise.org) is a cooperative, non-regulatory program administered by the National Fire Protection Association and sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, the US Department of the Interior, and state forestry organizations. It is designed to reach beyond the fire service by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in the effort to protect people, property, and natural resources from the risk of wildland fire - before a fire starts. The Firewise Communities approach emphasizes community responsibility for planning in the design of a safe community as well as effective emergency response, and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping, and maintenance.

Activities under the Firewise Communities Program include assisting individuals, neighborhoods, subdivisions, small towns and similar private residential communities with implementing actions to help prevent the potential for home ignitions from wildfire. These include techniques in home sitting and development, home construction, and home landscaping and maintenance. Activities also include assisting residential communities in becoming recognized Firewise Communities/USA sites. While counties are not eligible entities for recognition, counties can successfully support small communities in their jurisdictions in the recognition process. To become recognized, communities undertake the following five actions:

1. Complete a community assessment and create a plan
2. Form a Firewise Board or Committee
3. Hold a Firewise Day event
4. Invest a minimum of \$2/capita in local wildfire mitigation projects. (Volunteer hours, equipment use, time contributed by agency fire staff, and grant funding can be included)

5. Submit an application to the Firewise Communities Program via their state liaison.

Counties applying for Title III funds to implement Firewise activities can assist in all aspects of a community's recognition process, including conducting or assisting with community assessments, helping the community create an action plan, assisting with an annual Firewise Day, assisting with local wildfire mitigation projects, and communicating with the state liaison and the national program to ensure a smooth application process. Communities must renew their status annually to retain recognition; counties can assist in ensuring an annual Firewise Day takes place and can help fund or support local wildfire mitigation projects. See www.firewise.org/usa for more information about eligible activities in residential communities and a wide variety of examples of community activity around the nation.

May a county use title III funds to implement activities under the Firewise Communities program without utilizing a Fire Safe Council?

Yes, the Secure Rural Schools Act does not limit the implementation of activities under the Firewise Communities program to a Fire Safe Council. A county may decide how to utilize title III funds to implement activities under the Firewise Communities program.

Do Title III county funds that were not obligated by the county by September 30, 2008, remain available to be expended by the county for the 6 uses identified in section 302(b) of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 ("old Secure Rural Schools Act"), as originally enacted by P. L. 106-393 and amended by section 5401 of P.L. 110-28? OR, can those county funds be expended by the county for the 3 uses in section 302(a) of the new SRS Act, as reauthorized and amended by P.L. 110-343?

Title III county funds that were not obligated by the county by September 30, 2008, remain available to be expended by the county for continuing projects that had been initiated by September 30, 2007, only for the 6 uses in section 302(b) of the old Secure Rural Schools Act.



NEW MEXICO FIREWISE COMMUNITY OF PAA-KO FEATURED IN NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Mike Madden a resident of the Paa-Ko community located in New Mexico just north of Cedar Crest was recently profiled in the Mountain View Telegraph newspaper. Madden a retiree, has worked with others to help make the community of Paa-Ko a recognized Firewise community.

In the article, written by Lee Ross, credits Madden, the New Mexico Forestry Division, the fire department, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Ciudad Soil and Water conservation District for helping to reach recognition.

Some highlights of being Firewise are having two available exits, increased water supply and thinning of vegetation in the area. Homeowners worked in groups to increase neighborhood watch and increase communication among neighbors about evacuation plans and other emergencies. Building a Firewise base is helping in other natural disasters too. Congratulations to Paa-Ko for all their recent hard work!

