

WILDFIRE

NEWS AND NOTES

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Open Wide: Fire Service Leadership Should Look to Dentistry as a Model for Prevention



By Hank Blackwell

Numerous articles and research repeatedly illustrate the necessity to focus more attention toward fire prevention rather than fire suppression. America Burning, published in 1973 by the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, is just one example of the vivid illustration detailing the struggle the fire service has in changing its emphasis from suppression to prevention. The last several decades have underscored the overwhelming need to emphasize fire prevention as a priority, yet the movement toward this priority has been frustratingly slow. Reluctance to initiate this change remains a factor, yet the primary obstacle may be due to the lack of a consistent methodology regarding fire prevention programs. Indeed if this is true, the development of new models could accelerate this much needed shift.

In 1947, the President's National Fire Prevention Conference published several recommendations regarding fire prevention with many being met to date. The National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control recommended in "America Burning" that local government make fire prevention at least equal to suppression in planning of fire department priorities. Despite these recommendations, the United States "still has more fire deaths than any nation in the world"¹, and North America continues to lead the world in structural fires, fire deaths and firefighter injuries with two to four times the average number of incidents suffered in European countries.²

The accelerated repetitions of structural losses in our wildland/urban interface areas underscore this issue. Would not a well-funded, effective prevention program reduce the number and costs of fire losses? Some fire service agencies continue to resist attempts to change their job description to focus to a more on prevention. Based on previous attempts to look at our national fire problem, clearly we need to approach fire prevention education efforts by fire service personnel with the same level of intensity as we do our fire suppression programs.

Historical data continues to document the continuing problem of less than adequate fire prevention efforts in the United States. Noted fire service author John Granito

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Preparing for Evacuation - Some Helpful Tips

In the event of a sudden emergency such as a wildfire, you may have just minutes to gather your family and important papers, and get out of your house — possibly for good. If that were to happen tomorrow, how prepared are you to drop everything and evacuate your home? Do you know where you would go? What you would take and what you would leave behind?

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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 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. The committee is still seeking public comment and it can be submitted until mid-February 2009.
- 2) **NFPA 1: Fire Code and NFPA 1141: Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas** - These standard 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. A Request of Proposal (ROP) was published on December 29 and opens the document for public comment until March 6th, 2009.
- 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. This document just went through the ROP process and all comments will be reviewed in early March 2009.

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. 



Firewise Website, Give it a Click!

Did you know the Firewise website is the cornerstone of the national program? Did you know that almost all of our resources to learn, teach, or perform Firewise techniques can be downloaded with the click of a mouse? Did you know that almost all of our information is free-of-charge or provided for only a nominal shipping charge from our Firewise Catalog?

Firewise is really about people and communities doing things together to make their homes more resistant wildfires. However, the Firewise website can help you and your communities reach that goal. We challenge you to visit the website and look for these popular items:

Publications: Each quarter, we publish three useful periodicals--the Firewise Newsletter, Wildfire News and Notes, and the Firewise How-To Guide. To find out when the latest issues are posted go to the website at the top of the page and join the "Email List".


Interactive Modules: The site's Firewise You Can Use section is full of interactive modules that were especially designed to make learning how to be Firewise even more fun and interesting.

Learning Center: The online courses available in the Firewise Learning Center were created and approved by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group for use by the Firewise Communities program. If you want to do some in-depth learning, you will enjoy this area.

Firewise Questions: Do you have a Firewise question? Send it, directly to us through the site, and we'll be happy to answer, normally within a day or so.

Wildfire Resistant Plant lists: Plant lists for many states can help you select the right landscaping options for your home.

Online Wildfire Curricula: If you want to teach others about wildfire safety, this is the area for you.

There are so many other great areas of the website, please visit anytime at www.firewise.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 have 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.

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:

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Changes to Payment to States

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(h) of the old Secure Rural Schools Act. 


New Website for the National Incident Management Organization

The National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) has a new website www.nifc.gov/nimo providing information about the organization and Incident Management Teams (IMT). The NIMO consists of four-seven member IMT's. The Atlanta and Boise teams are currently staffed and operational. Two additional teams, based in Portland and Phoenix, are in development. Each of the IMT's is charged with complex fire management as the primary focus of their positions using strong, full-time Command and General Staff available year round for incident response.

In addition to complex fire management, these teams have year-round "non-incident" duties in support of Fire and Aviation Management. Among these are: training, quality assurance activities, fuels management, fuels implementation, fire and resource management support, NWCG projects, cost containment, and leadership development.

When the teams are not on assignments, they support Fire & Aviation Management (FAM) focusing on the nine implementation actions outlined in the NIMO Implementation Plan. The teams work as a force multiplier on fire issues that cross agency boundaries. The basis of these issues consist of the need to increase fuels treatment, increasing capability and capacity of wildland fire resources through revisiting current training and qualifications, and developing a more progressive and effective fire management model for large, more complex fires.

NIMO works with all wildland fire agencies to provide consistency and improve fire management processes. All of the initiatives require long-term coordination and cooperation to assure that all agencies reap the benefits of future changes.

Visiting the website you will find bios of each of the four teams, dispatch process, frequently asked questions, and initiatives. 

IBHS to Offer Helpful Info to Keep You & 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. These will be available at www.DisasterSafety.org in late 2008. We thank Candace Iskovitz, Public Affairs Manager at IBHS, for providing this information. Be sure to visit www.DisasterSafety.org - where building science leads to real-world solutions.

Open Wide! Fire Service Leadership Should Look to Dentistry as a Model for Prevention

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Chris Carlson, AP Photo

postulates that the apparent reluctance to embrace a more committed attitude toward prevention may have to do simply with fear of change. However, the sobering statistics in loss of life and property bear witness to the impact of the reluctance of the fire service to effectively embrace this change.

Decades ago, similar concerns and apprehensions regarding a dramatic shift toward preventive measures were apparent in the field of dentistry. As a result, the American Dental Association began to move toward preventing dental caries or tooth decay. Concerns among dentists regarding loss of the more exciting portions of the profession, reduction in patients and the expected financial stresses created a resistance similar to current attitudes found today in the fire service. However, dentistry has, for the most part, succeeded in reducing tooth decay and has migrated from reactionary practices (filling cavities) to proactive ones (improved dental hygiene, check-ups, and treatments). One can also compare the widespread use and effectiveness of fluoride in the reduction of decay to the more widespread use of smoke detectors to prevent extensive property damage and loss of life. Prevention strategies have not eliminated the need for dentistry nor fire suppression, but have succeeded in reducing and lessening the harmful effects of tooth decay and structure fire.

According to the literature, one of the primary methodologies for success is the ability to recognize the effectiveness of creating new attitudes about a profession, rather than struggling with the imposing task of changing entrenched ones.

Consequently, the target group for this indoctrination in the case of dentistry became the dental school student. Perhaps the fire service could be equally successful by focusing their efforts at the introductory level, when firefighters are recruited. Our success in creating prevention-oriented attitudes in new fire service personnel may provide the key to the success of our own fire prevention programs. The template provided by the dental profession appears to be both worthy of our attention and relatively easy to follow.

The American Dental Association (ADA) enlisted government and industry assistance to support and promote their efforts. This success is evident in the public health agencies' participation in numerous dental care and prevention campaigns. The fire service agencies could use this as a pathway to successful establishment of prevention partnerships with private entities and public sector organizations alike. The ADA was extremely successful in enlisting the assistance of the U.S. Public Health Department for their education programs. It is clear that stronger lobbying efforts at all levels will have a positive effect upon prevention legislation, enforcement and education for the fire service.



Quachita (AR) Job Corps Center Training

Such efforts have proven highly successful in fire prevention programs in Japan and Europe. The Firewise Communities program continues to support similar paradigm shifts most recently illustrated by their new "Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone" seminar. This course, based upon scientific research and wildfire post mortem studies, has begun to awaken fire personnel and homeowners to the validity of making the shift toward ignition resistant homes and communities and the importance of the reintroduction of wildfire into our forests and interface communities.



Developing partnerships with homeowners

Active involvement of the insurance industry may prove to be an effective tool for the U.S. fire service. Again we can take note of the statement of the ADA regarding "the value of a healthy mouth and the penalty for a bad one." This is yet another valuable parallel for fire service leaders. The relationship between both fire service and dentistry to the insurance industry is strikingly similar. As one dentist notes, "Prevention has obviously been recognized by the insurance companies as effective, as you know, because they generally pay 100% towards preventive care (cleanings, x-rays, fluoride, etc.) while the percentages they pay drop off dramatically for restorative procedure and is usually capped."

The new paradigm is powerfully significant - with ignition-resistant communities and common understanding

and partnerships, we can allow wildfire to burn through interface areas without tremendous structural losses. By lowering fire intensity, we create the opportunity for shelter-in-place and homeowner mitigation of small fires once the primary fire front has moved on. Incentives can include insurance rates that reflect the value of a safe home and community, and the penalty for hazardous conditions. Firefighters trained to understand effective prevention and mitigation – and to effectively teach homeowners these concepts – can lead the way.



Dentistry has been highly successful in changing the scope and priority of their profession to prevention and, it should be noted, has prospered in the process. Valuable lessons may be learned from the example of dentistry in their proactive move from suppression to prevention. The parallels are clear: create new attitudes in the recruit, develop stronger government and industry partnerships such as school programs and fire safety engineering agency programs and involve the insurance industry in the development and support of fire prevention curricula aimed at the new fire recruit. New data, as seen in the Home Ignition Zone model, can dramatically change our recurring wildfire losses. With a continued focus and a commitment to utilize a previously proven methodology, the fire service may more rapidly change some of our more dubious statistics. 🔥



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Preparing for Evacuation - Some Helpful Tips, *continued from page one*

What route would you take to get where you were going, and do you know the alternative route(s), should the initial route be inaccessible? These are just some of the factors you'll need to consider should such an emergency arise. Following are some helpful tips to help you make sure that you'll be ready. With preparation and practice, you'll improve your chances of getting out with what you and your family need, and ending up in the right place.

Paramount to the success of your evacuation is planning ahead. These five steps can help get you and your family on the road to safety:

1. Arrange your evacuation ahead of time by: Identifying where you can go in the event of an evacuation. Try to have more than one option — the home of a friend or family member in another town, a hotel or a shelter – and make sure it is safe. Keep the phone numbers and addresses of these locations handy. Also, if you intend to shelter with friends or relatives in the area, be sure to advise them of your intentions.

Mapping out a primary route and a backup route in case roads are blocked or impassable, and travel by car if possible. If you plan to travel with a neighbor, organize this well in advance. Make sure you have a map of the area available, and be sure to allow additional time for slow traffic conditions and poor visibility.

Identifying a specific place to meet in case your family members are separated before or during the evacuation. This should include knowing what you will do in the event your children are at school and/or other family members are at work. Find out the school policy if wildfire threatens. Don't allow panic to drive anyone out in life-threatening conditions searching for missing family members. Also ask an out-of-town friend or family member to act as a contact person.

Listening to NOAA Weather Radio www.noaa.gov/ or local radio or TV stations for evacuation instructions, and be prepared to evacuate early. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Case studies show that this is a life-determining decision and it may be necessary to go to your chosen refuge on any day on which the danger of wildfire is extremely high. If you decide to wait until there is a fire burning, you must leave well in advance of the arrival of the fire front. Never wait until the last moment.

2. Create a home inventory that details all of your personal property. That way, you'll ensure that you have purchased enough insurance to replace your possessions. It will also speed the claims process, and will substantiate losses for income tax purposes. Make sure you keep a copy with your important documents and a second copy in a safe place outside your home (in a safe-deposit box, or with an out-of-town friend or family member).

3. Plan what to take ahead of time and be sure to pack survival equipment along with any essential documents or possessions. If you are evacuating pets, bring along a supply of food for them. Keep a list ready, so you can pack the car quickly when needed. Following are some essentials to be sure you have at the ready:

- Medicines, prescriptions and first aid kit
- Bottled water
- Clothing and bedding (sleeping bags, wool blankets, pillows)
- Flashlight, battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Special items for infants or elderly or disabled family members
- Computer hard drive or laptop
- Photographs Pet food and other items for pets (litter boxes, leashes)
-

4. Gather important documents and keep them in a safe place that you can access easily. You'll want to be sure to take them with you in the event of an evacuation. These include:

- Insurance policies
- Prescriptions

- Birth and marriage certificates
- Passports
- Drivers license or personal identification
- Social Security cards
- Recent tax returns
- Employment information
- Wills, deeds and recent tax returns
- Stocks, bonds and other negotiable certificates
- Bank, savings and retirement account numbers
- Home inventory
-

5. Take the 10-minute challenge: This real time test is the best way to determine whether you are ready. You'll know you're truly ready when you can get your family and belongings into the car and on the road to safety in just 10 minutes. By planning ahead and practicing, you should be able to gather your family members and pets, along with the most important items they will need, calmly and efficiently, with a minimum of stress and confusion.

Information for "Preparing for Evacuation" was derived from the Web site www.iii.org/prepare/be_prepared/general/evacuation and tips provided by Firewise adviser Judith Leraas Cook.



The Firewise Newsletter - November/December 2008 edition features a wrap-up of the Backyards & Beyond Conference held in Tampa last November. Check it out from www.firewise.org

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. **Please provide input by January 12, 2009;** through the following method(s): Completing a short survey at: <http://wildfirelessons.net/Surveys.aspx> or, contact your respective agency's SHWT Representative: <http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/shwt/team2.htm>

The original Wildland Fire Safety Awareness Study/TriData Phase 3 Report is available for download at: <http://www.nifc.gov/safety/phaseIII.htm>.

Your recommendations will assist us in providing NWCG with opportunities to improve wildland fire safety and health for firefighters and is greatly appreciated.



Firewise Leadership Awards Honor Efforts to Reduce Wildfire Risk

Throughout the country, the National Firewise Communities Program is recognizing outstanding individuals and organizations for their leadership in promoting a cooperative approach to reducing the loss of lives, property, and resources in the wildland/urban interface. The recipients were presented with the award at the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program's 2008 Fire Education Conference *Backyards and Beyond* in Tampa, Fla. "This year's winners run the gamut," said Chief Will May, chair of the NWCG's Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Working Team. "From state officials to small non-profits, all of our winners possess the passion to help spread the message of the Firewise mission." Winners were selected based on their impact at the local, state-wide, or regional level.

Regional level winners include:

InterfaceSouth, US Forest Service, Southern Research Station – Gainesville, Fla.
Kirk Rowdabaugh, Arizona State Forestry Division – Phoenix, Ariz.

State level winners include:

John Edwards and Don Wells, Wildcat Community Inc. – Jasper, Ga.
Patrick Mahoney, Florida Division of Forestry – Bradenton Fla.
Texas Firewise and Urban Wildland Interface Team, Texas Forest Service – Fredericksburg, Texas

Local level winners include:

Colorado Springs Wildland Risk Section, Colorado Springs Fire Department – Colorado Springs, Colo.
Cook County Firewise Committee – Grand Marais, Minn.
Three Rivers RC&D Wildland Fire Education Prevention – Pocatello, Idaho
 Firewise Leadership Awards

