



U.S. Fire Administration
Working for a fire-safe America

Creating a Community Wildfire Protection Plan

May 2025



FEMA

Creating a Community Wildfire Protection Plan

May 2025



FEMA



U.S. Fire Administration
Working for a fire-safe America

Mission Statement

We support and strengthen fire and emergency medical services and stakeholders to prepare for, prevent, mitigate and respond to all hazards.



U.S. Fire Administration
Working for a fire-safe America

Table of Contents

Overview.....	1
Key Collaborators	1
Identified Risk/Fire History Maps	1
Assets at Risk	2
Forest Health/Fire Fuels Class	5
Action Plan	6
Additional Information	10
Signature Page	10
Reference Materials	11

Overview

This guide is not all-inclusive, but it is designed to assist you in creating your [Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#). The more agency representatives and resident leaders you include in the process, the better the plan will be. You will need to identify your unique risks and create your solutions.

Remember to connect with state and local organizations that can provide additional guidance about local risks and code requirements. For example, the state of [Texas](#) offers excellent advice on developing a CWPP. You can find more reference materials at the end of this guide.

Key Collaborators

Everyone who lives and works in the community should be invited to participate in developing your CWPP. When inviting collaborators, don't forget:

- ❖ Local tribe members.
- ❖ Companies and organizations that manage the infrastructure (cell towers, utilities, schools and other public facilities).
- ❖ Emergency response services (fire and police, etc.).
- ❖ Land managers (federal, such as U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and tribal, state and local representatives, etc.).
- ❖ Granges.
- ❖ 4-H groups.
- ❖ Faith-based groups.
- ❖ Resource conservation districts.

You can add or subtract contacts as needed. The individuals participating should reflect the demographics of your community. The more participants you include, the better the plan. You will have a fundamental understanding of the needs and strengths in your jurisdiction.

Identified Risk/Fire History Maps

Include the research you completed before your community meeting. Be sure to include maps with your plan.

Check out the USFS's [risk-mapping tool](#) for assistance with mapping and identifying community risk.

1. Fire history: The [U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\)](#) provides some information. You can also work with your state forester or USFS, U.S. Park Service, or DOI representatives to guide you if they are available.

You can also draw your design on a local map. Understanding fire history is important. Sometimes, wildfires burn periodically in the same area or more intensely in an area that has not burned in many years.

You can find additional fire history information on the National Interagency Fire Center Interagency Fire Perimeter History Map at <https://data-nifc.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/nifc::interagencyfireperimeterhistory-all-years-view/about>. The information can help you craft creative wildfire safety projects.

Please save this file to your device and open it in a PDF application like Adobe Acrobat so you can see all the attachments.



Click when you see this icon to download a template to complete, print and include with your plan.

-
2. Use a topographic map with identified assets at risk. USGS maps can be downloaded free of charge.
 3. Use the vegetation fuels class maps. Check with [Landfire](#) and/or a local forester.
 4. Use [research about the](#) local population's demographics to identify capabilities and better understand how to work with and for the community. For example, do you have a large population of aging residents who do not have cars? They would need assistance with transportation in an evacuation. Will educational/outreach materials need to be produced in multiple languages or use infographics? Check out [City-Data](#).
 5. Headwater's Economics provides additional research tools to gather data to assist communities located in rural areas.
 6. Use the [U.S. Geological Survey's online tool](#) to help identify which wildfire hazard and risk assessments are available. It provides information about available risk assessments and links to assessment data when publicly available.
 7. Consider including a map that identifies the locations of fire and other emergency services buildings and resources, including fire stations and hydrant/water source locations.

Assets at Risk

Here, you will define the infrastructure and homes in your community. You should consult a local, federal or state entity and/or a wildfire mitigation specialist to assist you.

Take a comprehensive look at conditions common to homes in the area; remember, you are not assessing each home but looking at the community holistically. If you are assessing a large community, you may want to create sectors for various neighborhoods identifying components that lend themselves to home ignition from embers based on home construction type.

Research shows that most homes and structures ignite and burn during a wildfire because of construction components that lend themselves to easily igniting, poor landscape maintenance, the condition and location of attachments such as fences and decks, outbuildings and the location of firewood, vehicles and other potentially flammable materials close to the home.

As you identify common characteristics of homes found in the area and define areas of home/infrastructure construction that could contribute to structure ignition, you can identify actions that reduce your risk of loss.

Some of these design features could include:

- ❖ Wood shake shingle roofs.
- ❖ Stucco roofs without bird stops.
- ❖ Gutters that are full of flammable material because of overhanging trees.
- ❖ Open eaves.
- ❖ Decks with material stored underneath.
- ❖ Dry, dead vegetation and trash are immediately next to homes and outbuildings.
- ❖ And others, focusing on the first 5 feet.

For assistance, consult the [U.S. Fire Administration](#), the [Institute for Business and Home Safety](#), the [Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network Self-Assessment Tool](#), and the [National Fire Protection Association](#).

Below is an example table to help you. This is not all-inclusive; please add your own identified potential ignition sources.

Example

Home structure component	Potential ignition source	Home maintenance suggestion
Decks	Material stored underneath.	Remove, place in a closed shed and replace or treat with ignition-resistant materials.
Gutters	Leaves and pine needles in gutters.	Clean frequently, especially before fire season.
Eaves	Large gaps around.	Caulk or fill and paint over.
Vents	Open unscreened.	Screen with a metal screen of about 1/8 inch or replace with baffled or other fire-resistive vents.
Roofs	Poorly maintained, made of wood shakes or other combustible material.	Replace roofs with ignition-resistant designs (e.g., Class A, metal).
Home siding	Poorly maintained, made of wood shakes or other combustible material.	Replace home siding with ignition-resistant designs (e.g., stucco).
Windows and doors	Single-pane windows, gaps around doors.	Replace windows with double-pane, tempered glass. Replace doors with fire-code-rated ones. Seal gaps around windows and doors to keep embers out.
Landscape around homes	Overgrown with weeds, dry, dead vegetative matter; large flammable bushes under windows.	Ensure the area within the first 5 feet of the home is lean and green. Remove open trash receptacles, building materials and trash next to the house. Use nonflammable rock mulch instead of wood mulch.
Stucco roof	No bird stops at the ends.	Clean debris such as nests from openings and cement ends, or add bird stops.
Fencing	Flammable construction is attached to the home.	Replace at least 5 feet of the flammable fence that attaches to the home with nonflammable material such as metal or rock.

Don't forget outbuildings (sheds, chicken coops, etc.) within 100 feet of the home that, when they burn, could cause the main structure to ignite. Please add additional items that you identify.

Example

Outbuildings/ infrastructure	Potential ignition source	Maintenance suggestion
Sheds	Gas cans outside.	Store inside the locked shed, preferably inside a locker.
Chicken coops	No door; hay and flammable material inside.	Install a door.
Pump house	Dead vegetation around the outside.	Remove all flammable material around the building, focusing on the first 5 feet and improving landscaping within 100 feet.

Address the condition of community buildings such as schools and churches. Examine the condition of the vegetation along the roads to improve evacuation needs. Make sure there are at least two separate ways out of the community.

Identify updates to critical infrastructure, such as public utilities. For example, if power to the area went out due to a wildfire, would the local water facility be able to supply water? An alternately powered generator may be needed. Is there an area cleared around power poles? (Community members could work on this in conjunction with the local utility companies.)

Example

Critical infrastructure	Potential hazard	Maintenance suggestion
Roads	Roads are not properly marked with signs.	Install nonflammable metal signs to make it easier for emergency responders in smoky conditions.
Fire station	Vents are not screened on the bottom of the building, and doors are not correctly sealed.	Install a 1/8-inch metal non-corrosive screen, and seal around doors to prevent embers from entering the building.
Power poles	Dead vegetation growing around and tree limbs hanging over.	Work with the local utility company to remove all flammable material around the power pole, especially within the first 5 feet, and remove tree limbs hanging over power lines.

Include road and public works departments to address other infrastructure conditions. Are bridges load tested to ensure they are safe for fire trucks? Are the streets adequately identified with metal reflective signage that would not burn during a wildfire?

Forest Health/Fire Fuels Class

Use [Landfire](#), experienced foresters and/or wildfire mitigation specialists to examine the vegetation conditions within and surrounding the community, starting with landscaping around the homes. Identify the general health of the natural area.

- Are there problems with invasive pests?
- Were there large storms in the area, and is there a lot of deadfall?
- Is there a need for prescribed fire, mechanical or chemical treatments to reduce fuel load?

Be sure that you refer to experienced, credentialed specialists. A certified arborist can help with landscaping questions surrounding homes. In contrast, an accredited forester (agency representative or paid professional) can help you better understand what community projects can improve forest health.

Below is a sample. Your list will identify local forest health issues within and surrounding the community.

Forest/landscape health issues identified

This list is just a sample. You will have your own unique insect and disease issues. The guidance to restore a resilient landscape may require mechanical work, prescribed fire or other methods implemented by qualified professionals. Again, if you are completing a CWPP for a large area, you may want to break up these forest/landscape health issues identified by neighborhood or HOA.

Health issue identified	Professional guidance	Action to improve forest/landscape health
Insect issue example: oak mortality due to the gold spotted oak borer	If located around homes, contact a local arborist for advice. If there is considerable tree mortality along roads, especially primary evacuation routes, contact a local forester.	
Invasive plant issue example: cheatgrass	If it is located around homes, contact an arborist. Contact a forester or range specialist for the landscape along roads and surrounding the community.	
Flammable vegetation issue example: deadfall due to windstorms	Depending on location, if the surrounding homes and community can clear the deadfall. If located in a natural area, consult a forester or land manager.	

Health issue identified	Professional guidance	Action to improve forest/ landscape health
Invasive plant issue example: overgrowth of invasive bamboo	If located around homes, contact an arborist. Contact a forester or range specialist for the landscape along roads and surrounding the community.	
Invasive plant issue example: invasive broom	Depending on location: if surrounding homes, community effort; if located in a natural area, consult a forester or land manager.	Example: Two essential ways to manage brooms are mechanical removal and treatment with herbicides. Broom spreads through seed dispersal, so maintaining a healthy natural vegetation and reducing soil disturbance will minimize the spread of broom.
Unhealthy landscape issue example: overgrown woodlots between homes	Depending on location: if surrounding homes, community effort; if located in a natural area, consult a forester or land manager.	

Action Plan

Identify and prioritize project work in your community. Prioritize based on the greatest risk and where you can make the most significant impact. Identify your community's capability to complete projects. Choose simple low cost projects to start. This will provide easy wins to help build momentum within the community for the larger projects.

Include activities that engage volunteers, such as youth groups, colleges and high schools, encouraging youth to complete community service projects as part of their curriculum.

Consider speaking with local businesses. They may donate materials or resources to help with the project work.

Consider federal grant funding as you become more confident in completing identified projects. Remember that grants require considerable financial and project management oversight. Below are a few project work samples to help your community become safer during a wildfire.

Make sure your action plan ties into reducing your wildfire risk and the goals of the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#).

Action

Create fire-adapted communities.

Action	Crucial activities	Success metric	Project lead and partners	Importance
Pursue Firewise USA® site recognition.	Complete risk assessment with USFS, plan Firewise Day. Write community action plan.	National recognition as a Firewise USA site by 2021.	Project lead: local fire prevention officer, Happy Town Fire Department. Partners: USFS.	High
Provide information to recreational users about fire safety.	Posters about "One Less Spark – One Less Wildfire" at park kiosks.	Reduced number of recreational user wildfire ignitions.	Project lead: park ranger. Partners: Boy/Girl Scouts and other youth volunteers.	Medium
Reducing risks for home ignition.	Completing risk assessment of individual homes.	More homes comply with local ordinances.	Project lead: community mitigation specialist/ building or code enforcement. Partners: Office of Emergency Services/ local resource conservation district.	High

Create fire-resilient landscapes through collaboration on public and private lands.

Action	Crucial activities	Success metric	Project lead and partners	Importance
Remove flammable material around homes in the neighborhood.	Organize a community clean-up day. Secure a donated dumpster. Plan and host an event.	Amount of material removed.	Project lead: local fire prevention officer, Happy Town Fire Department. Partners: youth and other neighborhood grass-roots volunteer efforts.	High

Action	Crucial activities	Success metric	Project lead and partners	Importance
<p>Assist vulnerable populations with fuel reduction assistance.</p> <p>Focus: helping to improve the wildfire safety of the whole neighborhood by helping those who need assistance.</p>	Organize an event to help homeowners who cannot do landscaping maintenance on their own.	Number of residents assisted.	<p>Project lead: senior or community center coordinator.</p> <p>Partners: local volunteers, donations from private corporations.</p>	High
<p>Remove deadfall left by windstorms.</p> <p>Focus: Remove flammable materials located within the first 100 feet around homes.</p>	Secure the donation of a chipper, green dumpster, or waste facility that allows green dumping. Advertise via local newsletter, banner at fire station, or web page, the time/ date when the chipper or dump will be available to give homeowners adequate time to collect materials that have accumulated around their homes.	Amount of material removed.	<p>Project lead: community mitigation specialist/ building or code enforcement.</p> <p>Partners: Office of Emergency Services/ local resource conservation district.</p>	Medium

Improve fire response capabilities.

Action	Crucial activities	Success metric	Project lead and partners	Importance
Provide weather information to local emergency responders, especially when responding to wildfires.	Installing weather monitoring equipment and computer applications.	Provide daily updates and hourly updates during a wildfire weather event.	Project lead: local fire department. Partners: local emergency managers, USFS, perhaps a private industry grant and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.	High
Develop a communications plan for sending information and notices to the public.	Integrate with public alerts and warnings plan for status updates and instructions for evacuation; coordinate with community leaders.	The public is informed of the current event status, what to do, where to go and when and how to leave in an evacuation.	The local emergency manager, fire department, communications team, emergency alert staff and regional news and weather affiliates coordinate with community leaders.	High
Identify water sources.	Add a reflective blue marker in the center of the road where the hydrant is located.	Number of hydrants marked throughout the community.	Project lead: water district/public works department in collaboration with the local fire district. Partners: a grant from the federal program or private industry.	Medium

Additional Information

Additional information can include firefighting capabilities, needed memoranda of agreement between other entities, [improving community evacuation capabilities](#), [smoke readiness capabilities](#), and future development plans for the community.

Note that this document is a living document. Revisit and update it as you complete project work, identify maintenance items, or the community expands and includes new partners. Make the document available for everyone to review and approve before implementing.

Signature Page

Ensure that you have a signature page for documenting the collaboration and approval of your plan. Agency and organization representatives should sign and date. You will need signatures from the applicable city, county and/or tribal government, local fire department(s) and the state entity responsible for forestry.

It is not required, but you could include representatives from all participating groups if you wish.

Reference Materials

- Community Wildfire Protection Plan. (n.d.). National Wildfire Coordinating Group online glossary. <https://www.nwcg.gov/term/glossary/community-wildfire-protection-plan-cwpp>
- CWPP Task Force members. (2008, August). *Community guide to preparing and implementing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan*. Forests and Rangelands. https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/documents/resources/communities/CWPP_Report_Aug2008.pdf
- Jakes, P., Burns, S., Cheng, A., Saeli, E., Nelson, K., Brummel, R., Grayzeck, S., Sturtevant, V., & Williams, D. (2007, March). Critical elements in developing and implementing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). In B. W. Butler,
- W. Cook, comps, *The fire environment—Innovations, management, and policy*; conference proceedings. 26-30, Destin, Florida. Proceedings RMRS-P-46CD. Fort Collins, Colorado: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. CD-ROM. p. 613-624. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/28604>
- Jakes, P. J. (2012). *Best management practices for community wildfire protection plans*. U.S. Forest Service, Research and Development Group. https://www.fs.fed.us/research/highlights/highlights_display.php?in_high_id=48
- Jakes, P. J., Nelson, K. C., Enzler, S. A., Burns, S., Cheng, A. S., Sturtevant, V., Williams, D., Bujak, A., Brummel, R. F., Grayzeck-Souter, S., & Staychock, E. (2011). Community wildfire protection planning: Is the Healthy Forests Restoration Act's vagueness genius? *International Journal of Wildland Fire*, 20: 350-363. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/38474>
- Landfire. (n.d.). <https://www.landfire.gov/>
- U.S. Department of the Interior. (n.d.). *Fuels management*. Office of Wildland Fire. <https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire/fuels>
- Wildland Fire Policy Committee. (n.d.). *Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) - Leader's guide*. International Association of Fire Chiefs. <https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/community-wildfire-protection-plan-leaders-guide>
- Williams, D. R., Jakes, P. J., Burns, S., Cheng, A., & Nelson, K. (2009). Community wildfire protection plans: Enhancing collaboration and building social capacity. *JFSP Research Project Reports*. Paper 144. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/53687>
- Forests and Rangelands. (2004, March). *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan*. <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/documents/resources/communities/cwpphandbook.pdf>



U.S. Fire Administration
Working for a fire-safe America

16825 South Seton Ave.
Emmitsburg, MD 21727
www.usfa.fema.gov

May 2025