



Arkansas Firewise, 2016



Call (501) 580-9607 with any questions or email Firewise@arkansas.gov ; www.facebook.com/ArkansasFirewise

- **The Arkansas Firewise program is a wildfire safety, education, and prevention effort sponsored by the Arkansas Forestry Commission (AFC).** The Arkansas Firewise program is the most successful Firewise program in the United States, thanks to funding from the U.S. Forest Service, and assistance from AFC staff. Arkansas Firewise has worked in more than 280 communities and all the state parks. It helps prevention and education efforts specific to the wildfire needs of each area of the state. Arkansas Firewise is part of Firewise Communities/USA, which is part of the National Fire Protection Association.
- **Individuals, communities, and fire departments benefit from Firewise training, education, and resources.**
- **The main messages are:**
 - Homeowners should create defensible space (area directly surrounding structures) so that homes are more easily protected from wildfire.
 - Defensible space is: **lean, clean, and green.** A **lean** space has mowed, short grass; trees that are trimmed of branches six feet from the ground; and maintained landscaping that does not touch roofs or windows. A **clean** space is cleared of debris such as multiple vehicles, yard toys, tools, and other material that could be flammable. A **green** space is free of dead vegetation including leaves, pine needles, sticks and twigs –only healthy, live vegetation in this area because it is less flammable than dead, dry debris.
 - Defensible space acts as a barrier between homes and forested or wildland areas. Consider anything that could transfer fire between homes and surrounding vegetation a wildfire hazard.
- **The primary objectives of the Arkansas Firewise program are:**
 - Educate homeowners about the importance of defensible space.
 - Train and educate fire departments and communities about how to prevent wildfires and wildfire damage.
 - Work with communities around Arkansas on their Firewise education needs.
 - Manage the grant funds and paperwork associated with recognizing Firewise fire departments.
- **What can the Arkansas Firewise program do for your community?**
 - Wildfire education for community groups and fire department training sessions. Safety fairs, luncheons, youth rallies, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other youth groups, volunteer events, clubs, and conventions (no matter how big or small) are excellent opportunities to request Firewise presentations at no cost. Free newsletters, literature, and programs are available to any civic group or fire department.
 - Fire departments have the greatest incentive to be involved with the Firewise program. Firewise educates about specific wildfire risks of individual houses in the district – and provides grant money, training and support. Firewise grants are only offered to fire departments. A total of \$3,500 is available to fire crews during the first year and an additional \$500 renewal grant is available each year after. Firewise recognition requirements include completing risk assessment surveys on 80% of homes in your district, hosting a fire safety education event for your community, completing a wildfire mitigation project on a home or civic space in your district, and developing a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan. AFC staff members can help with all parts of the grant process.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How do we start the Arkansas Firewise grant process?**

Schedule a presentation. Presentations can be on a regularly scheduled training night, during a lunch, or any convenient time and location for you. Call 501-580-9607 or e-mail your request to firewise@arkansas.gov. The initial presentation provides you with an overview of the program and the Risk Assessment Training provides attendees with two hours of Arkansas Fire Academy credit.
- **What can we purchase with our grant money?**

The first \$1,000 received for completing risk assessments can be spent however fire department personnel see fit (as long as money is spent on the fire department). The remaining \$2,500 must be spent on wildfire equipment included on an approved list. That list can be found at www.arkansasfirewise.com, or e-mail Sheila Doughty at Sheila.doughty@arkansas.gov for a copy. The Little Rock Firewise office must receive receipts for the purchase of this equipment. The \$500 renewal grants can be spent however firefighters see fit in support of their Firewise and wildfire mitigation efforts.
- **What paperwork is involved?**

When your fire department receives Firewise training, we will provide you with forms. To receive funds, volunteer time totals and other forms must be completed and submitted to the Little Rock Firewise office. Staff members are happy to help you in completing each of these forms.
- **How often do the risk assessment surveys have to be completed?**

Once a fire department completes risk assessment surveys on 80% of homes in the wildland/urban interface, these surveys do not have to be completed again (unless significant changes take place).
- **Do crew members have to assess homes that are dangerous?**

It is not the desire of the Firewise program to endanger the lives of anyone. If homeowners are unfriendly or if an area is dangerous to visitors, we do not require you to survey the area – simply skip that residence and continue with others.
- **When is the deadline for finishing the program?**

There is no deadline to finish Firewise requirements during the first year. Risk assessments, mitigation projects and wildfire education projects can take as long as you need them to during your initial recognition process. **An October 1st deadline is in place for all renewals.** So – the second year that you are in the program, and beyond that, you must have all renewal requirements completed by October 1 in order to receive a renewal grant.
- **Who can help with the Firewise recognition process?**

Anyone in your community can help with program requirements. Civic clubs, church groups, and the like, are excellent sources of volunteers and can help with education and mitigation projects. Invite residents to the Risk Assessment Training so that they can help with wildfire surveys. You can include these same residents in completing mitigation projects and/or anything related to wildfire training and safety in your area. We encourage local student clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts to participate.
- **How does our fire department get recognized?**

Once the requirements are reached and all paperwork is turned in to the Little Rock office and processed, Firewise staff members can provide or arrange newspaper coverage, town meetings, area-specific literature and/or flyers for any event or project that your department would like to host at no charge. Contact the Little Rock Firewise office to discuss your community's needs.