



www.firewise.org

# Firewise NEWS



Media Contacts: Tony Zagora: 314.982.7747, [tony.zagora@fleishman.com](mailto:tony.zagora@fleishman.com)  
Amy Bollinger: 314.982.8638, [amy.bollinger@fleishman.com](mailto:amy.bollinger@fleishman.com)

Program Contact: Michele Steinberg: 617.984.7487, [msteinberg@NFPA.org](mailto:msteinberg@NFPA.org)

---

NWCG Wildland/Urban  
Interface Working Team

1 Batterymarch Park  
Quincy MA 02169

USDA Forest Service

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau of Land Management  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
National Park Service

Federal Emergency  
Management Agency

International Association of  
Fire Chiefs

National Emergency  
Management Association

National Fire  
Protection Association

U.S. Fire Administration

State Forestry Organizations

**For Immediate Release: May 19, 2008**

## **More Than 100 Communities Earn National Distinction for Wildfire Preparedness in 2007**

### ***National Firewise Communities/USA program increases participation by 50 percent over previous year***

**QUINCY, Mass.** – The 2007 western wildfire season will be remembered for the series of wildfires that swept through southern California in October, claiming nearly 1,500 homes in their paths. What onlookers witnessed was a tragedy, and as several areas of the country are beginning to battle a new round of wildfires in 2008, many residents and communities are taking steps to prevent the loss from wildfire in their own communities – and becoming Firewise in the process.

In 2007, the Firewise Communities/USA program continued to grow at a rapid pace, recognizing more than 100 new communities, including the first communities in New Hampshire and Mississippi. The program also surpassed the 300<sup>th</sup> community milestone, with a total of 305 recognized communities since the program began in 2002. Other growth for the program includes expansion of the already strong network of Firewise Liaisons, including representatives in 45 states and two Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) regions. Firewise Liaisons have been a crucial part of the growth and retention of the Firewise program, and they play a key role in educating communities and capturing the great Firewise work being performed by residents across the country.

“Communities across the country are continuing to realize that homes do not have to burn when wildfires occur,” said Jim Smalley, program manager of the National Firewise program. “Residents in wildland communities are the key to reducing wildfire loss. It is the resident who has to take the appropriate actions around the individual home to reduce the risk, and then join with other residents and neighbors to create a Firewise community. The community approach is the best way to address the wildland fire issue.”

The Firewise Communities/USA recognition program encourages residents to join together with local fire officials to identify wildfire hazards and implement tailored mitigation programs for their communities. Fire and forestry organizations play an integral role in the program, assisting communities with hazard assessment and local plan development.

-more-

*In addition to member agencies and organizations, the National WUI Fire Program functions in cooperation with other NWCG Working Teams, the National Fire Plan, and related programs.*

Since its inception in 2002, the Firewise Communities/USA recognition program has seen tremendous involvement at the state, tribal, and local level and has driven more than \$24 million in community investment of time and resources in wildfire mitigation. More than 381,000 people have been directly touched by Firewise Communities/USA activities across the country. There are now more than 300 active Firewise Communities/USA sites in 36 states, with a 90 percent retention rate over five years.

"One of the great things we are seeing is the incredible retention rate (90 percent) for the program," said Judith Leraas Cook, Firewise Communities program manager. "This shows us that residents are continuing to embrace Firewise and working year after year to combat the threat of wildfire in their communities."

For more information on the Firewise Communities/USA® program, please visit [www.firewise.org/usa](http://www.firewise.org/usa).

(*Editor's note:* If you are interested in a full list of the recognized Firewise Communities/USA sites, please click [here](#).)

*Firewise Communities/USA is a part of the national Firewise Communities program, an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, state forestry organizations, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Emergency Management Association, the US Fire Administration, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, and the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, visit [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).*