

Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team
Activities Overview
2005–2006

Since 1986, the Team has overseen the activities of the interagency cooperative National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program, which included development of numerous videos and print publications directed at firefighters, homeowners and landscapers. In 1996 the program developed a project that became known as the Firewise Communities Program. Activities in the early stages of this project included the launch of the Firewise home page (www.firewise.org), the organization of a group of national Firewise stakeholders, and the design, testing and delivery of a Firewise Communities Workshop series.

More than 3,000 individuals have participated in more than 30 national [Firewise Communities workshops](#) since the program began in 1999, including representatives from more than 1,080 communities in 47 states, Canada, Australia, and US Trust Territories. An estimated 7,000 individuals have participated in regional and local workshops. While the national series concluded in late 2003, the Firewise Communities program continues to support regional and local organizations interested in hosting Firewise workshops by supplying materials and facilitator training.

As a practical follow-up to the workshop series, the national [Firewise Communities/USA](#) recognition program was developed to facilitate local solutions to wildfire preparedness goals and to recognize communities for working together to protect residents and property from fire in the wildland/urban interface. To be recognized as a Firewise Communities/USA site, local communities must create and implement a local plan with cooperative assistance from state forestry agencies and local fire staff. In addition, communities are required to continue regular maintenance and education to retain recognition status.

At the end of 2006, state foresters from 43 states have assigned Firewise Communities Liaisons to implement the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program in their states. More than 210 communities in 34 states have received recognition to date. Communities have documented investment in local Firewise projects of more than \$13 million since 2003. This represents a return on investment of approximately 4 to 1 when considering the yearly funding for this portion of the national program in the same time period. 2006 marked the fifth year of participation for 11 of the 12 pilot communities in the program. Overall retention of participating communities is more than 90%.

Firewise communications and outreach has expanded greatly in the past two years. In addition to creating and distributing a [Firewise Communications Guide](#) and creating press releases for new products and projects, staff have published articles and bylines in numerous national and regional trade publications. A weekly news monitor noted mentions of Firewise in more than 415 stories in national media outlets during 2005-2006. There were also nearly 1,500 stories about wildfire preparation, and nearly 2,000 stories covering general wildfire issues. In early 2006, a new logo

and style guide were established for the program, along with a complete redesign of the program website, www.firewise.org, and new display exhibits to be used at conferences around the U.S.

The WUI Working Team has overseen the development of a number of informational materials in the past few years, including the well-known *Fire Fighter Safety in the Wildland/Urban Interface* video instructional series, *Firewise Home Improvement*, a video for homeowners, builders, and landscapers, *American Perspectives on the Wildland/Urban Interface*, a compendium of essays from individuals in a diverse array of disciplines, and *Using Water Effectively in the Wildland/Urban Interface*, a video for fire departments. In 2005, the program sponsored the development and publication of the American Planning Association's report, *Planning for Wildfires*. In 2006, staff created an updated primer for a general audience, *Firewise: Community Solutions to a National Problem*, and launched a new technical bulletin for Firewise Communities/USA sites called the *Firewise How-To Newsletter*. In addition, a new brochure, *Be Firewise Around Your Home* was developed and distributed, and the *Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Hazard Assessment Methodology* booklet was completely revised. The two program newsletters ([Firewise Newsletter](#) and [Wildfire News & Notes](#)) continue to be published bi-monthly in electronic format.

The Team sponsored the second National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Education Conference, "[Backyards and Beyond](#)" in November 2006. As the first conference did, this event brought together nearly 450 community leaders, fire professionals, planners, and individuals from other disciplines to discuss wildland/urban interface fire issues and learn about effective mitigation techniques. It introduced interface, land use, and mitigation planning to new audiences, recognized outstanding community programs and accomplishments, and provided continuing education for already involved community leaders and fire professionals. It also provided an opportunity to honor seven outstanding individuals and organizations in the first "[Firewise Leadership Awards](#)" presentation sponsored by the Team.