

COMMUNITIES

Compatible With

NATURE

Over the past century, America's population has nearly tripled, with much of the growth flowing into traditionally natural areas. These serene, beautiful settings are attracting more residents every year. This trend has created an extremely complex landscape that has come to be known as the wildland/urban interface: a set of conditions under which a wildland fire reaches beyond trees, brush, and other natural fuels to ignite homes and their immediate surroundings.

Consequently, in nearly all areas of the country, the wildland/urban interface can provide conditions favorable for the spread of wildfires and ongoing threats to homes and people.

Many individuals move into these picturesque landscapes with urban expectations. They may not recognize wildfire hazards or might assume that the fire department will be able to save their home if a wildfire ignites. However, when

an extreme wildfire spreads, it can simultaneously expose dozens — sometimes hundreds — of homes to potential ignition. In cases such as this, firefighters do not have the resources to defend every home.

Wildland fires are a natural process. Making your home compatible with nature can help save your home and, ultimately, your entire community during a wildfire.

Homeowners who take proactive steps to reduce their homes' vulnerability have a far greater chance of having their homes withstand a wildfire.

The nation's federal and state land management agencies and local fire departments have joined together to empower homeowners with the knowledge and tools to protect their homes through the National Firewise Communities Program. Firewise

Communities is designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving firefighters, homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in efforts to design, build, and maintain homes and properties that are safely compatible with the natural environment. The best Firewise approach involves a series of practical steps that help individuals and community groups work together to protect themselves and their properties from the hazard of wildfire. Using at least one element of a Firewise program and adding other elements over time will reduce a homeowner's and a community's vulnerability to fire in the wildland/urban interface.

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