

# Firewise Communities

An introduction to Firewise concepts for local communities



# Agenda



- National Firewise Communities Program
- Understanding Wildfire
- How Homes Ignite
- Hazard Assessment
- Firewise Construction
- Firewise Landscaping
- Firewise Communities/USA



# NATIONAL FIREWISE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM



# Firewise Communities Vision



“With adequate planning and cooperation among varying interests, wildfires can occur without disastrous loss of life, property, and resources. ”



# Why Firewise?



- Wildfires can put dozens (even hundreds) of homes at risk simultaneously.
- Firefighters may not have the resources to protect each home.
- Residents **can take action** to increase their homes' chances of surviving a wildfire.

# UNDERSTANDING WILDFIRE



# Understanding Wildfire

- Fire is an essential, natural process:
  - Replenishes soil nutrients
  - Removes dead and dying vegetation
  - Creates conditions for healthy re-growth





# Understanding Wildfire



- **Society's influence has altered historic fire cycles, leading to an unnatural build-up of vegetation in our wildlands.**
  - History of prevention and suppression
  - Risk of larger fires
  - Effects on plant and animal life





# Wildland/Urban Interface

- Set of conditions under which a wildland fire reaches beyond trees, brush, and other natural fuels to ignite homes and their immediate surroundings.

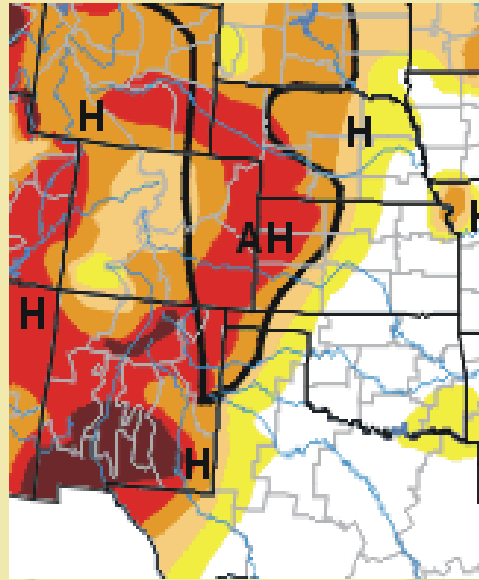


# HOW HOMES IGNITE



# How Homes Ignite

- Fuels
- Weather
- Terrain



# How Homes Ignite

- Fuels
  - **Surface fuels**
  - **Ladder fuels**





# How Homes Ignite

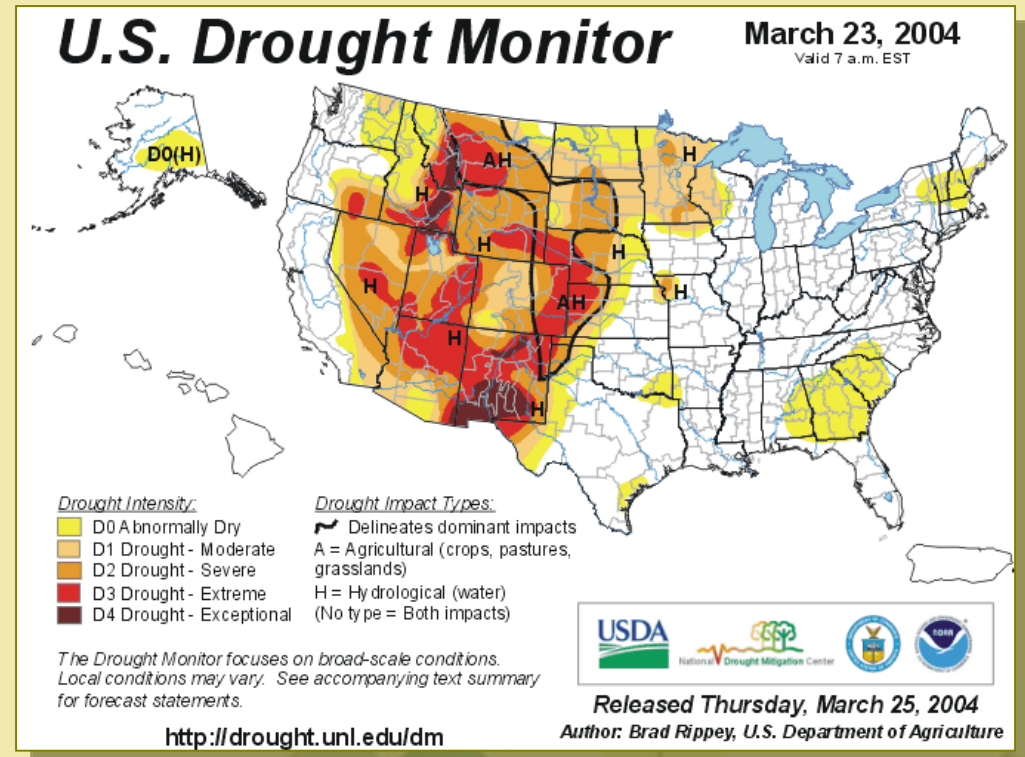
- Fuels
  - Surface fuels
  - Ladder fuels
  - **Crown fuels**



# How Homes Ignite



- Fuels
- **Weather**
  - **Dry weather, low humidity**
  - **Wind**
  - **Drought conditions**



# How Homes Ignite

- Fuels
- Weather
- **Terrain**





# HAZARD ASSESSMENT



# Hazard Assessment



- Low Hazard Areas
  - Limited wildland; vegetation is not continuous
  - Humid climate with short dry season
- Moderate Hazard Areas
  - Wildland continuous within and around community; flammable vegetation, broadleaf and evergreens
  - Periods of dry, windy weather with a dry season or prolonged drought
- High Hazard Areas
  - Dense vegetation; highly flammable vegetation; medium to tall broadleaf, evergreens and conifers
  - Multiple occurrences of dry, windy conditions; prolonged drought or dry season that lasts more than 3 months

# HOME IGNITION ZONE



# Home Ignition Zone



**Home Ignition Zone:** The home in relation to its surroundings within 100 to 200 feet



# **FIREWISE CONSTRUCTION**



# Firewise Construction

- The **Home Ignition Zone** includes the home, in addition to its immediate surroundings up to 200 feet.

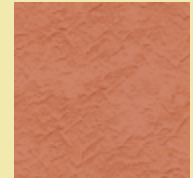
If it's attached to the house, it's part of the house.



# Firewise Construction



- Rated roofing materials
  - Composition shingle, metal, clay or cement tile
  - Roof assembly
- Fire-resistant exterior walls
  - Stucco, stone, brick, block
  - Vinyl siding should be supplemented with metal screening





# Firewise Construction



- Double-paned or tempered glass
- Enclose eaves, fascias, soffits, vents
  - 1/8" opening or smaller
- Protect overhangs and attachments
  - Remove fuels from these areas
  - Cover openings



# FIREWISE LANDSCAPING

Lean, Clean, and Green Home Ignition Zone



# Firewise Landscaping



**Home Ignition Zone:** The home in relation to its surroundings within 100 to 200 feet



## All Hazard Areas

- Home Ignition Zone 1: The home and its immediate surroundings, up to approximately 30 feet.
  - Low-flammability plants, landscaping materials, accessories
  - Prune limbs 10 ft. from ground; generous space between trees
  - Mow, prune, and water regularly
  - NO firewood or propane tanks



## Moderate and High Hazard Areas

- Home Ignition Zone 2: 30 to 100 ft from home
  - 30 ft between tree clusters; 20 ft between individual trees
  - Fuel breaks
  - Branches and leaves 6 to 10 feet from ground
  - Remove heavy accumulation of flammable debris





## High Hazard Areas

- Home Ignition Zone 3: 100 to 200 ft from home
  - Remove heavy accumulation of woody debris
  - Remove smaller conifers growing between trees
  - Reduce density of taller trees



# FIREWISE COMMUNITIES USA





# Firewise Communities/USA



- National recognition program for communities that take proactive measures to prepare for wildfire.



## Criteria

- Enlist a wildland/urban interface specialist to complete a community assessment and create a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community.
- Sponsor a local Firewise Task Force Committee, Commission or Department which maintains the Firewise Communities/USA program and tracks its progress or status.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA Day each year that is dedicated to a local Firewise project.

## Criteria

- Invest a minimum of \$2.00 per capita annually in local Firewise projects.
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA that documents continuing compliance with the program.

## Sample "Firewise Day" Activities

- Host a chipping day for residents to remove excess vegetation from their property, as well as community property.
- Hold a pine needle or debris removal day in cooperation with the local fire department.
- Hold a Firewise education day that provides information about proper plant and construction choices, introduces local staff, and distributes pertinent Firewise information for the community.
- Create a fuel removal project that enlists local volunteers.



## Sample Program Activities

- Place articles in the local paper about wildfire and the need for your community to be prepared for it. Showcase your accomplishments.
- Conduct Firewise landscaping and construction information sessions at a local home improvement store.
- Modify homeowner association covenants to include Firewise concepts.





## Sample Program Activities

- Enlist local fire staff to conduct a wildfire hazard overview at a community meeting.
- Distribute Firewise information at community festivals.
- Include homeowner tips in community newsletters.
- Conduct Firewise information sessions at neighborhood association meetings.



# Next Steps...



- Contact [www.firewise.org/usa](http://www.firewise.org/usa)
- Establish a local Firewise Board, Committee or similar task force
- Assess community vulnerabilities to wildfire
- Identify community goals and create a plan of action
- Conduct outreach to property owners and community groups
- Submit application

# Broad Community Considerations



## Community Considerations

- Planning and zoning statutes, building codes, vegetation management and other development ordinances
- Street and address markings; access to homes
- Water supply
- Evacuation plans and routes

# DISCUSSION

