

How to Become a Firewise Community

Since our inception, part of our mission has been to protect Hawaii's communities from the effects of wildfire. Through collaborative efforts, Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Waimea (Kamuela), has helped erect firebreaks and dip tanks to improve wildfire response along community boundaries, reached out to various schools about wildfire prevention and preparedness, developed Community Wildfire Protection Plans in the State's most fire-prone regions, among a number of other projects that have helped protect communities from the threat of wildfire.

As of Summer of 2015, we are working with a number of communities to help them achieve Firewise Communities Recognition, a nationwide program that recognizes communities for their



efforts towards reducing the loss of lives, properties, and resources to wildfire. "The Firewise Communities approach emphasizes community responsibility for planning in the design of a safe community as well as effective emergency response, and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping and maintenance."

If your community is interested, we can help you through each step of the certification process!

Benefits of Becoming a Firewise Community

- 1) Framework for Sustained Wildfire Preparedness Activities
- 2) Learning About Wildfire
- 3) Peace of Mind
- 4) Community-Building
- 5) Citizen Pride
- 6) Publicity (*inspires other communities to become Fire-Adapted!*)
- 7) Access to Funding and Assistance
- 8) Possible Reduction to Insurance Costs



Over 1,000 communities nationwide are participating in the program. As of 2015, we helped Kanehoa subdivision on Hawaii Island become the second Firewise Community in the State of Hawaii. Prior to 2015, the first and only one in the state was Kohala-By-the-Sea, which has maintained its recognition status for over a decade. We are currently working with at least 10 communities statewide and are looking to recruit more to join the effort. We hope to eventually see Hawaii become home to a vast range of resilient communities participating in a program that is spreading like wildfire nationwide. Will you join us in becoming the next Firewise Community?

hawaiiwildfire.org



What does it take to become a Firewise Community?

- 1) **Form a Firewise Board:** This will be the governing body that will be in contact with HWMO representatives throughout the certification process.
- 2) **Invest at Least \$2/Capita in Firewise Projects:** This can be fulfilled through volunteer match or cash contributions.
- 3) **Complete a Community Assessment:** A 1-2 day assessment (depending on the size of the community) that HWMO and potentially HWMO's fire agency partners would help complete.
- 4) **Create a Plan:** After sitting down and reviewing the assessment with your committee and broader community, we can help your team formulate an action plan to prioritize fire mitigation projects. This will lead into...
- 5) **Hold a Firewise Day:** In order to qualify for recognition each year, the community has to come together for a Firewise Day project. Projects can range from community awareness events to fuels reduction projects to evacuation drills. HWMO can help support the community's initial projects to get the community moving forward. The first Firewise Day could even be a community-wide Ready, Set, Go! Wildfire Preparedness Workshop put on by HWMO.
- 6) **Submit Application:** The final application is due on Dec. 31 of each year in order to qualify for that year's certification. HWMO would have the final application reviewed and signed by the Division of Forestry and Wildlife administration, which would be the major requirement for application submittal. Upon final review by the NFPA Firewise Recognition Program's staff, your community could be well on its way towards official Firewise Communities Recognition. Each year, after completion of an annual Firewise Day event, your community must submit a renewal application to maintain Firewise Communities Recognition status.

Although it may seem daunting at first, the Firewise Communities Recognition Program is meant to be a painless process and again, HWMO can help you with each step of the way during your initial efforts. Eventually, the goal is for each community to become a self-perpetuating Firewise Community dedicated to the common goal of protecting life and property via collaborative efforts.

If you are interested or have further questions:

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