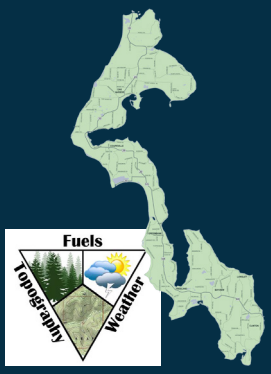
Firewise® Arrives on Whidbey Island

Why is Wildfire a Concern on Whidbey Island?



Wildfire risk is closer than you might think. Fuels, prevailing winds, and topography are the key factors in determining a home's ignitability during a wildfire incident. Communities tucked within forested areas, especially along the dry, bluff zones that receive prevailing west winds in summer, are more at risk. Through Firewise, homeowners can take proactive steps to understand the science behind home ignitability, and techniques to create defensible space in their home ignition zones.

Whidbey Island and Firewise®

How Working Together Can Work

Wildfire conversations are often sparked during the dry summer season, when talk of burn bans and fire events unfold. Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson said it perfectly – albeit in reference to football instead of fire – *"The separation is in the preparation."* There's no better time than the present - whether it's winter or summer - to learn about, prepare for, and protect homes and properties from the threat of wildfire.

Many of us have friends or family in eastern Washington that have been affected by wildfire. In fall 2015, Karen Bishop, District Manager for Whidbey Island Conservation District (WICD), saw firsthand how areas serviced by the Okanogan Conservation District were affected by the summer's fires, and listened to the stories of landowners. Amidst a charred landscape, Karen also saw apparent "oases" – farms and homes that still stood after the fires came through. But why? That's where the ***Firewise Communities® Program*** comes in.

WICD, in partnership with Central Whidbey Island Fire and Rescue District (CWIFR), North Whidbey Fire and Rescue District (NWFR), South Whidbey Fire/EMS (SWF/EMS), and WA Department of Natural Resources (DNR), has launched a Firewise program to communities in central Whidbey. Since 2002, Firewise has focused nationally on empowering residents to work collaboratively and take proactive steps to protect their homes from wildfire. On Whidbey, geographically tailored presentations and support from local fire experts can help residents learn how homes ignite based on Whidbey's unique landscape and climate, and what they can do to adapt and reduce their risk. Firewise is based on communities taking five steps. Over 1,200 recognized Firewise communities exist, and Whidbey Island communities are encouraged to learn more and join, too!

West side communities in CWIFR are most at risk to wildfire due to fuel, wind, and topography.

Are You an Interested Homeowner?

Schedule a free, one-hour Firewise home assessment.

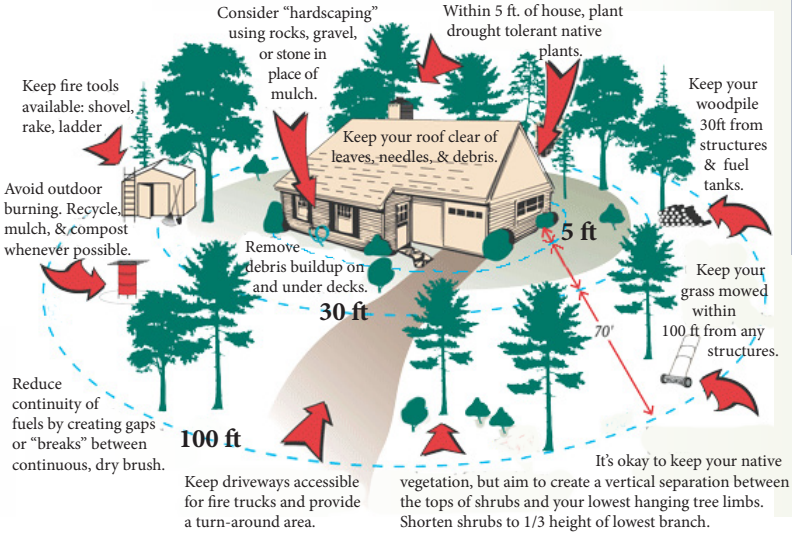
Contact Kelsi Mottet, WICD's Marketing, Education, and Outreach Coordinator, at kelsi@whidbeycd.org, or (360) 678-4708.

AND

Become a Firewise® Community

1. **Obtain a wildfire risk assessment.**
2. **Form a board or committee, and create an action plan based on the assessment.**
3. **Conduct a "Firewise Day" event.**
4. **Invest a minimum of $2 per capital in local Firewise actions for the year.**
5. **Submit an application to your state Firewise liaison.**

Firewise® Home Ignition Zone



Firewise® Tips and Tricks

- **Prune low hanging limbs** & **clean roofs and gutters**.
- **Keep flammable plants & mulches 5 feet** from your home, or try "hardscaping" with gravel, rocks, or stone.
- Use low–growing, well pruned, **fire-resistive native plants**.
- **Screen or box-in vulnerable areas** below patios and decks, and near attics and soffit vents.
- **Sweep decks and porches** clear of fallen leaves.
- **Keep woodpiles at least 30 feet from any structure**.

And check out: www.whidbeycd.org/firewise/

Top Resources for Homeowners

Visit the WICD website at www.whidbeycd.org

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