
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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500th Community in California Designated 'Firewise'

California Leads the Nation in Statewide Firewise Community Participation

With fire season 2022 already underway, CAL FIRE announced that California accomplished a new record with the recognition of the 500th Firewise USA® site in California. The recognition by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) highlights the fact the community has taken steps to ensure that wildfire risk to homes is reduced in their area.

“While California has held the highest amount of Firewise Communities nationwide for quite some time,” said Chief Daniel Berlant, Assistant Deputy Director and Chief of CAL FIRE-Office of the State Fire Marshal’s Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division. “We are proud to say the state now has set a new record with 500 Firewise USA® recognized Communities in California.”

Hollister Ranch in Santa Barbara County gets the distinction of being California’s 500th Firewise USA® Community. “The community contains 133 parcels, and it was imperative that we really focus on how to make our homes more fire safe”, said Community Leader, and retired Battalion Chief, Scott Coffman, “this process brought everyone together to accomplish one important goal.” On March 12th, just four days after being recognized as a Firewise Community, the Hollister Fire broke out in the Hollister Ranch community. “Two homes in the path of the fire had been spared by defensible space efforts.” said Coffman, “the homeowners had recently worked to clear brush and their foresight allowed Firefighters to defend the homes, proving that hard work and cooperation truly does make a difference.”

The Firewise USA® recognition program is administered by the NFPA and provides a collaborative framework to help neighbors in a geographic area get organized and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community and reduce wildfire risks at the local level. Michele Steinberg, NFPA’s wildfire director, adds, “Wildfires can impact dozens or hundreds of homes simultaneously, and if my neighbors’ homes aren’t prepared, mine will be vulnerable, too. Firewise USA® is a process that helps people work together to bend down the risk curve.”

Individuals and communities participate on a voluntary basis. Community-wide recognition is provided when communities meet the program criteria, including forming a committee of residents and other wildfire stakeholders, obtaining a written risk assessment form from a local fire department, hosting an outreach event, and completing an application to become a Firewise Community.

“This accomplishment is part of California’s efforts to ensure communities are prepared against wildfire, said Chief Mike Richwine, California’s State Fire Marshal. “A critical component of our wildfire strategy continues to stress the need to ensure communities are prepared for wildfire by building and retrofitting homes with ember resistant materials, while ensuring homes have defensible space with a minimum of 100-foot clearance from dry vegetation.”

As an additional resource, as of January 1, 2022, a new division within CAL FIRE-Office of the State Fire Marshal has been established to further focus on these efforts. The Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division will build local and regional capacity and develop, prioritize, and implement strategies and projects that create fire adapted communities and landscapes by improving ecosystem health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience.

To begin the process and to learn of the necessary steps, visit <https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prevent->

[wildfire/firewise-communities/](#)

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