

Firewise West Virginia **Information Sheet**

What is Firewise West Virginia?

Firewise West Virginia is a state-level extension of the national Firewise program, which focuses on creating safe access and defensible space for homes built adjacent to woodlands. This area where forests and grasslands merge with structures is called the wildland urban interface. The primary goals of the Firewise West Virginia program are public education on measures to minimize property damage or loss from wildfires, encouragement of residents in high-risk areas to adopt and implement Firewise concepts and practices, and assistance to communities with the development of wildfire mitigation plans. Accomplishment of these goals will better enable homes to survive the rampages of wildfire in the interface.

How does the program work?

The WV Division of Forestry has developed the Firewise West Virginia program in cooperation with federal, state and local stakeholders. The project focuses on areas of the state having potentially high levels of hazard, risk, or value loss should they be impacted by wildland urban interface fires. In addition to requests received from communities, certain targeted communities within the project area are approached and offered assistance to develop wildfire mitigation plans. Services also include conducting homeowner association Firewise informational presentations, topic-specific workshops for community groups, and providing technical assistance with hazard mitigation projects in cooperating communities. Occasionally, training opportunities will be offered to volunteer fire departments, with topics such as wildland urban interface fire operations, woodland home risk assessments, portable pumps and water use, and basic wildland firefighting courses. Informational brochures and educational materials have been developed and presented in the project area to help spread the Firewise concepts.

Where is the program available?

During its initial development period, the pilot project was focused within the state's Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands counties. As the program expands into other areas of the state, requests from counties outside the pilot area are being serviced as quickly as possible.

How can more information be found?

For more detailed information on the national Firewise program, visit www.firewise.org and examine this award-winning website. Browse the West Virginia Division of Forestry website at www.wvforestry.com for updates on Firewise West Virginia. Specific requests may be directed to M. Rodger Ozburn, Firewise State Liaison, by calling (304) 825-6983, or email at firewise.westvirginia@wv.gov.

