

SD Fire-Rescue Department Tierrasanta Community

What is a Fire Safe Council?

- Fire Safe Council is grass root community based volunteer group working with local fire agencies, various community groups, businesses, federal, state, and county agencies having a vested interest in mitigating fire risks and threats. Fire risks such as fuels/vegetation reduction, fire prevention education, address signage, community wildfire preparedness.
- Community FSCs are a network of over 160 statewide working to make individual communities fire safe. The Fire Safe Council of San Diego County can assist in Grant writing, workshops and currently administers and manages federal funds that are allocated to community FSCs state wide.
- Through the formation of fire safe councils, property owners can learn to collaborate with agencies in order to identify and prioritize community projects.
- It is important to identify and mitigate fire risks on your property before a wildfire incident.
- Communities can and should educate themselves about how to properly maintain their homes and yards to meet local and state fire codes.
- Reality is: There are not enough public funds to create and maintain needed fuel reduction projects
- Reality is if you chose to live near open space, you must learn to live with wildfire. Therefore, you need to know your responsibility for your property.
- Reality is: It is not a matter if a wildfire will occur. It is a matter of WHEN will the next wildfire strike!

First Steps in forming a Fire Safe Council

- Develop a mission statement and community FSC objectives
- Identify first year goals and a timeline
- Hold regular community FSC meetings
- Demonstrate commitment and collaboration with partner agencies

The Benefits of a Fire Safe Council –

- Funding opportunities
- Assistance with applying and administering grant funds
- Partnerships
- Networking with other FSC's in San Diego
- Measurable risk assessment to homes and properties
- Help identifying and prioritizing projects
- Assistance writing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
- After becoming a 501(c)(3) can accept tax deductible donations
- Access to staff resources .i.e.... GIS analyst and Forester

Projects Include:

- Creating Defensible Space
- Chipping Projects
- Weed and Brush Abatement
- Fire Wise Community
- Fire Wise Landscaping
- Fire Adapted Community
- Fire Resistant Building
- Dumpster Programs

Firewise vs Fire Safe Council

Two is better than one

There is no need to choose between being a Fire Safe Council or a Firewise Community. Both programs offer residents and communities great tools and information for preparing and preventing a wildfire.

For newly formed Fire Safe Councils, the Firewise process teaches the community about its specific wildfire hazards through an assessment with local fire personnel, creates a plan of action to address those hazards, and involves the local residents in a Firewise event.

For established Fire Safe Councils, pursuing Firewise recognition would be another “feather in your cap” of accomplishments.

Fire Safe Councils and other community organizations can also greatly benefit from:

- Resources
- Tools and training offered by Firewise and the National Fire Protection Association.
- Plus, completion of the Firewise Communities Program provides national recognition by adding your community to a list of over fifty other communities who are also committed to wildfire prevention.

So, there's no need to choose between Fire Safe and Firewise. Instead, become both!

Firewise Communities (History)

California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) became the new State Liaison for the Firewise Communities Program in California in January 2012. As part of an agreement between the National Firewise Communities Program, CAL FIRE and CFSC, this new designation delegates CAL FIRE's authority as State Firewise Liaison to the California Fire Safe Council. The agreement is memorialized in a Memorandum of Understanding between CFSC and CAL FIRE.

The designation of California Fire Safe Council, a private nongovernmental 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, as State Liaison is unique within the national Firewise Program. Typically the role of State Liaison is designated to the State Forester, as was the case in California when CAL FIRE served as State Liaison. But California Fire Safe Council and CAL FIRE saw an opportunity to expand the reach of the Firewise Communities Program in California through California Fire Safe Council's strong presence throughout the state.

Hazard Fuels Reduction (HFR) Projects – The reduction of fuels within the community and within a buffer zone around the community is a key component of structure survivability. These projects can be funded and implemented in a number of ways:

- Community Initiative – A community, especially larger communities with established organizational infrastructure, can finance projects itself. The first step is generally to hire a Registered Professional Forester to design a project that can be put out to bid to contractors.
- HFR Grants – Various grants are available through state and federal agencies to reduce fuels in and around communities, especially if identified as a Community at Risk within the Wildland Urban Interface.

There are two methods of obtaining grant funds:

1. Local Organization – If a community has an approved CWPP and a local organization, such as a CSD or homeowners association, that is eligible to apply for and administer a grant, it may apply directly to the funding entity.
2. Fire Safe Council – All communities, regardless of whether they are Firewise designated or have a CWPP, can request assistance from the Council in obtaining grant funding.

Firewise Communities and communities with a CWPP have a much better chance of success:

- 1) They have identified the work that needs to be done,
- 2) Landowners have been educated to the importance of the work,
- 3) Landowners are likely to sign up to have work done on their properties.

All HFR work on private property can only be done with the landowner's approval, and projects must be of a sufficient size to be cost effective.

Fiscal sponsorship:

The Resource Conservation District, in partnership with the FSCSDC, can support community FSCs to seek and manage grants. This may be of interest to FSCs without 501c3 designation or those who do not have the capacity to manage grant funds.

Contact California Fire Safe Council at (619) 562-0096 or Britney.munoz@rcdsandiego.org for more information.

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