

# Community Conversation Workshops

October/November 2016



**FIREWISE USA™**

**Residents reducing wildfire risks**

Wildfire Division – June 12, 2017

## **Stakeholder engagement**

During October and November 2016, the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Wildfire Division hosted a series of six Community Conversation Workshops with wildfire stakeholders in Georgetown, TX; Helotes, TX; Austin, TX; Yakima, WA; Deschutes County, OR and Ashland, OR. Workshop locations were selected to provide diverse geographical areas, which included participants of differing levels of WUI program involvement, implementation and embracement of wildfire mitigation actions.

Each workshop's format was structured using a facilitated one-hour interactive conversation designed to collect feedback and input that will be used in NFPA's future development of wildfire resources and education/outreach materials.

Information collected from the six sessions is being used in the development of materials and resources that NFPA will create for residents with distribution to current and future Firewise USA program participants. Each session's stakeholders contributed information that NFPA will use to increase awareness, interest and participation in wildfire mitigation.

In 2012, a similar format was used in six cities with a targeted wildland-urban interface audience comprised of middle and high school age youth and their parents. The data collected from attendees of those workshops ultimately influenced the development of the following resources and campaigns for teens and other stakeholders living in wildfire prone areas:

- National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day campaign
- Wildfire mitigation projects for teens:
  - Community Service projects and video (English and Spanish)
- Preparing household pets and horse preparedness resources for a wildfire
- Wildfire Facts whiteboard video
- A series of virtual field trip videos and lesson plans

## **Data Collection**

The facilitated interactive format of each session provided opportunities for attendees to share how select wildfire related terminology and delivery styles can impact, resonate and motivate their interest and level of participation in mitigation actions. The objective was to better understand what the WUI audience wants and find the best vernacular to successfully connect with them.

The terminology explored in the sessions included the following:

### **Mitigation:**

In discussion about the word *mitigation*, the majority of attendees felt:

- It has a tax or insurance sound to it
- There's potential for some type of legal implication
- Not descriptive enough
- Sounds too technical

What resonated as an option for the word mitigation was simply replacing it with: Wildfire Risk Reduction.

### **Assessment, Evaluation, Inspection and Consultation:**

When used in a WUI context the words generate these associations:

- Tax or insurance related
- Potential penalty, fine or fee
- Concerns about who will see the data
- Implies costs for the service
- Has a governmental tone

The following options resonated more than the terms Assessment, Evaluation, Inspection and Consultation:

- Property walk-through
- Home or property visit
- Fire-risk overview

The feedback stressed whatever term is used, it must be made to feel personal to the homeowner.

### **Structure Hardening:**

Overwhelmingly, use of this term did not provide any point of reference or understanding:

- If it's going to be used, replace the word "structure" with home
- Sounds too military-ish
- No one knows what this means

What resonated as potential options included the following:

- Fire-resistive construction techniques
- Wildfire construction improvements
- Improving home survivability

### **Firewise Principles, Firewise Concepts and Home Ignition Zones:**

These terms are often used interchangeably, even when referring to different parts of a structure or landscape, participants stated that:

- What do the principles or concepts being referred to mean?
- Too many similar phrases
- It's confusing

Options that better resonated included:

- Use guidelines or information to replace principles and/or concepts
- Tell the user that they are science-based steps
- Of the three terms, Home Ignition Zone resonated the most, primarily because the word "ignition" was attention grabbing

### **WUI Program Names:**

Over the past few years, residents have shared that WUI program names can be confusing and they don't always understand which one is the best or most appropriate for them. They shared that:

- There's too many choices/names
- Don't understand the differences
- Repeatedly stated, "Why are there so many brands"
- Names need to be consistent for audiences to know what they reference

From a program perspective, the feedback on WUI program names stresses the need for program's to better coordinate their messages and more clearly define their targeted audiences:

- Don't have similar names
- Make programs supportive/complimentary and not repetitive or duplicative

### **Word Choices:**

Participants stressed the importance of avoiding jargon and never assuming the resident audience knows technical or scientific terminology.

### **Resource and Tool Choices:**

When trying to connect with audiences, materials need to include the following components:

- Be customizable to reflect local housing styles, building materials and vegetation
- Utilize testimonials from homeowners who had a home survive a wildfire, because of the risk reduction actions they implemented before the fire
- Be realistic in what homeowners can accomplish
- State the benefits of the actions
- Use diagrams and pictures

The Firewise USA program is using the information collected from the Community Conversation Workshops in our materials and information targeted to resident audiences.

NFPA's Firewise USA™ program is co-sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, the US Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters.

### **About the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)**

Founded in 1896, NFPA is a global, nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. The association delivers information and knowledge through more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering the NFPA mission. For more information visit [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). All NFPA codes and standards can be viewed online for free at [www.nfpa.org/freeaccess](http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess).

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