Firewise Community Risk Assessment

Guidelines for Fire Professional Walk/Drive Through

10/9/2023 (LS)

**Background:**

The Community Risk Assessment is one of the 6 Steps jn the Firewise USA Recognition Process. After initial Firewise USA recognition, a community risk assessment must be updated every 5 years at minimum.

The Community Risk Assessment is a 14 page PDF document. The template is available on the NFPA’s Firewise USA website here: <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Firewise/Get-started/FirewiseCommAssess.ashx>

The Firewise community’s steering committee is responsible for collecting data and filling out this CRA document, then uploading it into their online Firewise USA application. One of the required components for completing this document is obtaining input for pages 8 and 9 (Observations and Recommendations) from a local Fire Professional or NFPA trained person.

The “Community Walkthrough” is a way of describing the event where a Fire Professional meets with one or more members of the steering committee, to walk or drive the newly forming Firewise community’s roads.

**Details:**

This event typically takes 1-2 hours. The goal is to obtain input from the Fire Professional for Observations and Recommendations for this community. The focus is on steps the community members can take (that they have control over) to reduce wildfire risk along roads, and to enhance access for fire responders.

This is NOT an event that requires walk-around of each or any home. Residents interested in individual Home Assessments can submit a request to the FireSafe Council of Santa Cruz County (or their local service) for an HIZ assessment. <https://www.firesafesantacruz.org/HIZ>

This IS an assessment of the community’s roads, driveways, signage, etc.

Examples of elements that might be commented upon:

1. Roadside vegetation management – keeping 10 feet clean on either side of the road to enhance evacuation safety and increase visibility around corners. This could mean mowing down low vegetation and limbing up trees.
2. Adequate clearance for large emergency vehicles – roadways and driveway entrances should ideally have 14’ tall by 14’ wide clearance
3. Signage – noticing if street signage is visible, streets well marked. Noticing if homes have visible reflective address number signs.
4. Marking hazards along the road – examples include deep drainage ditches, etc
5. Marking water sources for easy access for first responders – examples include blue reflective pavement markers near hydrants and private water tanks

Typically, the Fire Professional will provide verbal input, while one or more steering committee members scribe the key recommendations and observations made. At the conclusion of this event, the scribe might read back the key points made, to verify with the Fire Professional that nothing has been missed.

The resulting material can be used for both the Community Risk Assessment (pages 8 and 9) and to also inform action items in the Three Year Plan (another required Firewise application document).