



# Firewise Education

Educational Media  
Community Outreach  
Firewise Communities/USA

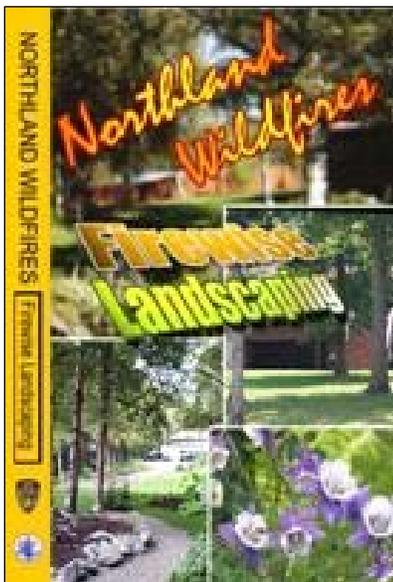
# Educational Media

## Annual Wildfire Calendars

Since 2006, the AFD Wildfire Mitigation office has produced and distributed yearly calendars promoting Firewise and wildland fire awareness. Each month covers a specific topic such as Firewise vegetation, preparing the home ignition zone, safe evacuation, statewide wildland fires, AFD wildland fire suppression and safe burning practices. The calendars are designed by the fire education specialist and printed locally. Approximately 4,000 calendars are distributed around Anchorage and throughout the State each year. Calendars are given to all homeowners who request Firewise home assessments, and they are available at all fire stations and AFD offices. The Alaska Division of Forestry distributes copies through their offices across the State.



The annual AFD calendar is an integral part of Firewise education at the Wildfire Mitigation Office. In the past, several other methods, such as newspaper inserts and bus signs, have been used. While the inserts reached thousands of residents, few residents retained it for family reference. The calendars are an effective educational tool since they can be used for the entire year while promoting a different message each month.



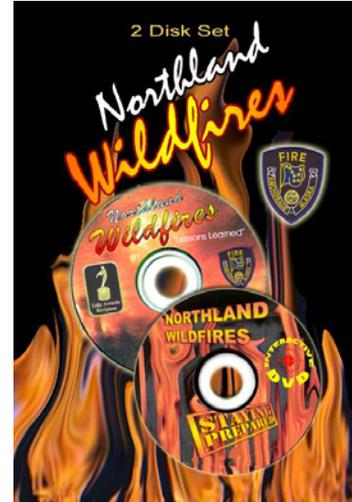
## Firewise Landscaping

Firewise vegetation describes plants in the home ignition zone that do not readily ignite or support the spread of fire. The arrangement and species composition of trees, shrubs, and grass within the first 30 feet of the home are critical elements in reducing the home's ignition potential from wildland fire. With Alaska's short but lively summers, many Anchorage area residents put tremendous effort into their yards and gardens. The WMO employs several methods to promote this concept: home assessments, posters at local greenhouses, the annual wildfire calendar and the "Northland Wildfires: Firewise Landscaping" dvd. This landscaping portion of the Northland Wildfires series uses local Alaskans to showcase their Firewise landscapes that

are attractive, simple, and effective. This award winning production clarifies that a fire safe yard does not need to be a moonscape that lacks vegetation or trees. The dvd is widely distributed alongside the wildfire calendar at public events and during Firewise home assessments.

## Municipal Video Center

The Municipal Video Center produced three dvds on wildland fire in Alaska. “Northland Wildfires: Lessons Learned” describes the 1996 Miller’s Reach Fire and the reasons why this large, wind driven fire at the wildland urban interface burned over 400 structures. In 2004, the Video Center produced a dvd about AFDs efforts in mitigating wildland fire: “Northland Wildfires: Staying Prepared.” In 2006, the production of “Northland Wildfires: Firewise Landscaping” elevated the message of Firewise vegetation and preparation of the home ignition zone to a level that was easily understood. Local examples of beautiful yards double as fuel breaks to slow the spread of fire. This series in addition to many other wildland fire videos are aired on Municipal Channel 10 throughout the spring and summer months.



The WMO staff works regularly with the Video Center to produce updated Firewise programming for Channel 10. These include public service announcements, short videos, and “AFD Magazine”, a monthly video of current events within the Anchorage Fire Department.

Website [www.muni.org/fire](http://www.muni.org/fire)

On the Municipal website, the Anchorage Fire Department’s page provides a suite of information about the department and programs for residents. Under Wildfire Mitigation, the WMO posts updates on neighborhood forest treatment projects, the application for Firewise home assessments and information about Firewise homes. The site serves as a warehouse for the research findings and lessons learned that the WMO applies on the ground. From the website’s links and resources, homeowners can learn how to apply these concepts to their own homes.



# Community Outreach

## Public Events

Face to face contact remains one of the most effective ways to motivate and educate residents to take action. The AFD Wildfire Mitigation Office has attended hundreds of events throughout Anchorage, Eagle River, and Girdwood since 2001. In 2002 and 2003, interns from the Student Conservation Association frequented events throughout the summer months on behalf of AFD. Currently, the WMO staff attends public events throughout the year to promote emergency preparedness and Firewise homes. It is during these events that many residents first realize that they are living in an area



*Interagency display used at public events.*



exposed to wildland fire. Two professionally designed displays and various handouts are used to showcase the wildfire program and fire safety. Annually, the WMO staff attends AFDs spring Open House, Division of Forestry's Open House in Palmer, corporate safety meetings, community council meetings, and additional partnership events such as National Public Lands Day and Earth Day.

*Rotor 1 at the 2008 AFD Open House.*

## Advertisements and Media Exposure

In addition to the wildfire education resources that the WMO distributes to the residents, it is sometimes necessary to further promote programs directly through media publications. Often,

**EAGLE RIVER WOOD LOT**  
**FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS**  
**8:00 AM – 5:00 PM**  
**through AUGUST 30**

**Anchorage Regional Landfill**

- Free Residential Use Only
- Brush & tree parts
- No land clearing debris
- No stumps or construction materials
- Loads must be covered & tied down
- Max length 6 ft

**ANCHORAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**WILDFIRE MITIGATION OFFICE**  
**267.4980 • www.muni.org/fire**

- Free Firewise Home Assessments & Cost Share Tree Removal
- Free Burn Permits

*Advertisement for the Eagle River wood lot in the Alaska Star newspaper.*

this can be accomplished through special feature news stories in the newspaper or television news. A direct news story is the most effective way to reach a large number of people when needing to quickly relay safety messages. WMO uses this method to remind the public of high fire danger, the Municipal ban on fireworks, and burn permit regulations. When brush fires do occur, the urgency of the situation creates a teachable moment where residents' attention can be captured to remind them of local fire danger. Local programs to the MOAs smaller communities can be highlighted in the Eagle River Star and the Turnagain Times.

The following article is from the Anchorage Daily News article on the Piper Fire, published July 3, 2008.

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## Wildfire toasts 10 acres near Campbell Creek



**GREENBELT:** Firefighters gain control of blaze; no injuries were reported.

By JAMES HALPIN and MONIQUE NEWTON  
Daily News reporters  
Published: July 3rd, 2008 12:02 AM

**UPDATE:** Firefighters worked through the night and by 4:30 a.m. were still in the area, 14 hours into the incident and still managing small flare-ups as they occurred, according to a fire department dispatcher.

A wildfire tore through part of the Campbell Creek Greenbelt on Wednesday afternoon, rapidly ballooning in size before being reined in by an all-out response, according to the Anchorage Fire Department.

The fire was reported at about 2:15 p.m. at less than a quarter acre, said department spokeswoman Jen Klugh. It was burning in a densely wooded area about a quarter mile southeast of Piper Street's southern-most point, "safely scary" from the nearest home, she said.

By the time the blaze was essentially under control at about 7 p.m., it was mapped at 10.1 acres, according to battalion chief Tom Kempton. There were no injuries reported, he said.

"The fire moved very quickly; it expanded very fast and got into the tops of trees," Kempton said. "There's going to be extensive mop-up with this fire -- I would suspect two or three days, especially if it's hot and dry like it is now."

A gentle north wind pushed the fire southeast -- away from the nearest homes -- throughout the afternoon, and confined it to an undeveloped area between the Campbell Creek greenbelt and Bicentennial Park.

"We do get them pretty often along this trail system," Klugh said. "We haven't seen anything to this size. This is not the kind of thing you want to see in Anchorage."

Julie Alvarez watched as the fire crept closer to the homes just across the street from hers. The closest it got to a building was about 150 yards, she said.

"We were all thinking we would have to be evacuated but then the wind switched," she said. "Everybody was ready. We all had our hoses out, but it didn't get any closer, thank God."

More than 60 responders battled the fire Wednesday, including 25 from the state Division of Forestry, which deployed a team of smoke jumpers from Fairbanks that was pre-positioned in Palmer.

Two helicopters alternately hauled buckets of lake water onto the fire. They were soon joined by an airplane that swooped in low over the gathering crowd of spectators and firefighters, barely clearing the treetops with its first of three retardant loads.

Ground forces attacked the fire with hoses, shovels and axes as they dug fire lines and cleared debris around the perimeter.

A handful of members of the American Red Cross of Anchorage showed up to show their support as well.

"We're just here to see if firefighters need anything," said Red Cross member Sue Thornton. "You never know when something little could turn into something big."

## BLACK SPRUCE

Dry conditions and flammable sap in the spruce helped fuel the fire.

The blaze crept along the ground in dry moss and flared up only when it ran "up the spruce like a ladder" in the densely packed trees, said Sue Rodman, a forester with the Anchorage Fire Department.

"We knew this would torch out because there's black spruce and it's very close together," said Rodman, noting that the area is also covered in moss and debris. "That's what really carried the fire today."

A thick pillar of smoke drifted hundreds of yards into the blue afternoon sky and was visible across the city at times. Its black and gray soot masked the sunlight and bathed the crews in orange light as they worked.

One man, whose home was closest to the woods, was busy spraying the structure with water, apparently trying to prepare in case the fire changed course. But for many, the fire was not close enough to cause alarm.

## HOMELESS CAMP

Frances Raskin, whose home was within a quarter-mile of the blaze, came out to see what was going on but said she was not concerned because it was a safe distance away. More a concern were the homeless camps, she said.

"There must be at least 30 people living back there," Raskin said. "None of us go back there because it's dangerous."

The cause of the fire remained officially undetermined Wednesday, although Kempton said a runaway campfire from a homeless camp was the "probable cause."

"We know that the fire originated in the area of a homeless camp," he said. "You'll find the remnant of fires all over the place."

With the holiday weekend approaching, Kempton urged the public to take care while celebrating.

"We want people to take all the precautions that are possible with camp fires," Kempton said. "Fireworks are completely prohibited in the municipality. ... We don't want to take any chances with another fire like this."



RON ENGSTROM / Anchorage Daily News

# Firewise Communities/USA

## Promoting Neighborhood Self Reliance

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Firewise Communities/USA is a national program sponsored by a coalition of federal agencies in cooperation with the National Fire Protection Administration, to assist communities in forming neighborhood alliances. Together, groups of homeowners coordinate their resources and abilities to prepare for a wildland fire event. Local, state and federal agency representatives often facilitate the development of a Firewise Community to help guide the process of planning vegetation management, water resource development and homeowner response during a fire.

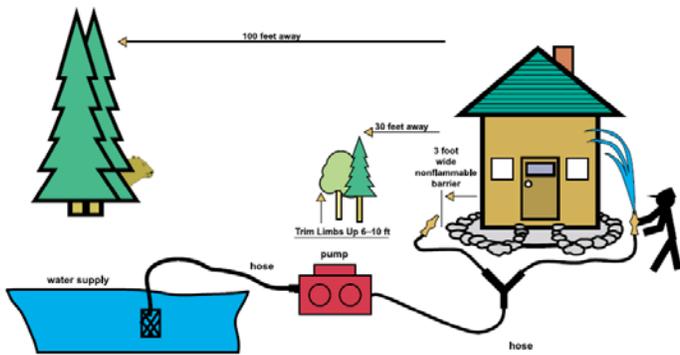
Neighborhoods can survive a wildland fire without having an associated residential disaster. Thorough preparedness is critical to reduce loss of life, property and natural resources. These communities can be homeowner associations, community councils, subdivisions, or even just a small group of residents willing to work together to make their neighborhood Firewise.



The goal of the program is to encourage and acknowledge action that minimizes home loss to wildland fire. It teaches residents to prepare for a fire before it occurs. Firewise Communities/USA is a simple, three-part template that is easily adapted to different locales.



*The topographic features of the South Fork drainage of Eagle River delineate a group of homeowners that will likely be dependent on their own resources in any emergency. Limited access for ingress and egress plays a critical role in emergency response and evacuation. It is possible to be prepared and survive a wildland fire in any neighborhood with planning and coordination between homeowners.*



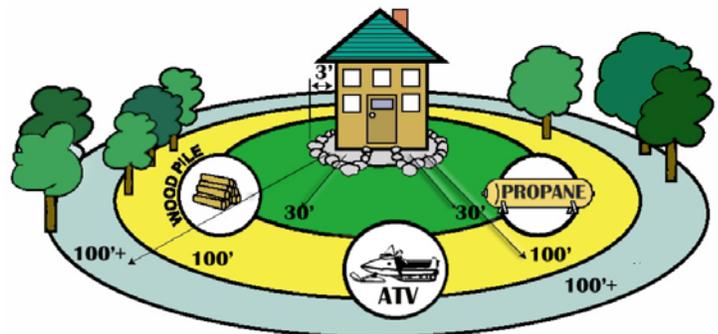
- An agency representative provides information about coexisting with wildland fire along with mitigation strategies specific to that area.
- The community assesses its risk and creates its own network of cooperating homeowners, agencies and organizations to provide resources for preparedness.
- The community identifies and implements local solutions.

Once these parameters are met by the community, they receive national recognition and a Firewise Communities sign.



The Emergency Watch Program, administered by the MOA Office of Emergency Management (OEM), provides a template for developing neighborhood plans to prepare for and act during all emergencies, including wildland fire. The WMO has partnered with the Emergency Watch program to implement Firewise Communities throughout the Municipality Of Anchorage. When the OEM is contacted by residents living in an area exposed to wildland fire, the WMO staff participate in their planning process and introduces the Firewise Communities

program. In 2008, several communities began this process, and it is expected that they will reach their Firewise Communities status within the coming year.



*Homeowners can actively reduce their exposure to wildland fire through coordination with the WMO to plan neighborhood forest treatment projects and apply for financial assistance through Firewise home assessments.*