



NEWS RELEASE

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New national report tackles wildfires head on

In a report to Congress, federal agencies, governors and state fire marshals, a Blue Ribbon Panel examined what state and federal agencies spend annually in fighting wildfires. The panel made recommendations aimed at improving efficiency and reducing the enormous cost—estimated at \$3 billion in public funds—incurred in fighting wildfires that threatened homes and other buildings. In 2007, according to the panel, U.S. wildfires destroyed 5,200 homes, buildings and other structures; burning about nine million acres; and claiming 19 lives.

“With more people building in areas at risk to wildfire, the threat to lives and property is rapidly increasing,” said Rick Weiland, CEO of the International Code Council, the organization that spearheaded the comprehensive effort involving 40 national organizations. “This report was developed by the nation’s leading experts who deal with wildfire issues, and it addresses specific ways communities can take protective action. The growing frequency and extent of wildfires is the reason the Blue Ribbon Panel’s work is so timely and important.”

The National Blue Ribbon Panel on Wildland Urban Interface Fire found that though there are already many well-developed wildfire programs, up to this point there has been no single, integrated national approach. It observed that different groups and layered authorities are tackling wildfire issues independently with overlaps and gaps in coverage, minimal communication among stakeholders and no clear view of the problem as a whole.

“Improving safety is not a technological challenge,” said Weiland. “It is one of initiative, community action and interagency coordination.”

The Panel’s self-funded report proposes a coordinated national effort. It addresses five specific ways communities can take action to improve public safety: education; insurance discounts and other incentives for homeowners who implement recommendations to protect their

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Blue Ribbon Panel report /Add One

property; programs to minimize wildfire damage; construction guidelines to reduce property losses; and fire department coordination.

In addition to the contribution of all of the organizations on the Panel, more than 800 public comments were received and evaluated in the preparation of the report.

To read the National Blue Ribbon Panel on Wildland Urban Interface Fire Report and view a list of organizations that participated in developing it, visit www.iccsafe.org/BRPreport.

The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention, develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states choose the International Codes, building safety codes developed by the International Code Council.

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