



NEWS RELEASE

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Most at-risk communities have no wildfire protection plan

More than 90% of the 44,000 U.S. communities at risk for wildfires do not have a community wildfire protection plan. Unprepared communities risk lives, property and environmental damage, and the enormous economic costs often fall on the shoulders of federal and local governments, according to a Blue Ribbon Panel.

The panel is organized by the International Code Council and other public safety organizations, federal agencies, forestry programs, local government associations, insurance companies and conservation groups.

“Communities that plan for wildfires have a distinct advantage: less damage when wildfires occur,” said International Code Council CEO Rick Weiland. “Communities in at-risk areas can take action to reduce the threat of a wildfire with a simple wildfire protection plan. A plan gets everything down on paper, from establishing a team of local decision makers and federal agencies that can help, to telling homeowners how to prepare, identifying areas most at risk and designating evacuation routes.”

The United States has seen a significant increase in the number of wildfires damaging homes in areas surrounded by wildlands.

“Often, the same reason people choose to build in wildfire-prone areas—being close to nature—is also a primary reason why their homes are at higher risk,” said Weiland. “A wildfire protection plan is a simple but powerful step to reduce the impact of wildfire.”

The National Association of State Foresters reports that of the 44,000 communities in 46 states at risk, only 3,300 have a community wildfire protection plan prepared and ready for implementation. An additional 450 communities are in the process of preparing a plan but aren’t ready to put it in action.

“Every year in Montana, wildfires present new challenges for communities,” wrote Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont., in a letter to the International Code Council. “I am encouraged that this Blue Ribbon Panel will bring together diverse perspectives on fire and land management, from public officials and policy makers to advocacy groups, forest management professionals and private interests.”

(MORE)

Wildfire protection plan /Add One

A number of wildfires are currently burning in Montana, as well as other states, including California, Idaho, Michigan, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming. Community leaders can download information on how to prepare a wildfire protection plan at www.iccsafe.org/wildfireplan.

“This group’s commitment to a self-funded effort also demonstrates that truly effective results will depend on the contribution from and cooperation of federal, state, local and private sector interests,” wrote Sen. Jeff Bingaman, D-N.M., Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in his letter to the International Code Council.

The Blue Ribbon Panel membership includes the American Institute of Architects; American Institute of Building Design; American Lands Alliance; American Planning Association; American Red Cross; American Society of Landscape Architects; Congressional Fire Service Institute; Council of State Governments; Deschutes County, Ore.; ESRI; Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics and Ecology; Home Safety Council; Institute for Business and Home Safety; Insurance Services Office; International Association of Fire Chiefs; International Association of Fire Fighters; International Association of Wildland Fire; International City/County Management Association; International Code Council; Keep America Beautiful; National Academy of Public Administration; National Association of Counties; National Association of Home Builders; National Association of RC&D Councils; National Association of Realtors; National Association of State Fire Marshals; National Association of State Foresters; National Fire Protection Association; National Geographic; National Governors Association; National Institute of Standards and Technology; National League of Cities; National Volunteer Fire Council; National Wildfire Coordinating Group, Wildland Urban Interface Fire Working Team; National Wildfire Suppression Association; Natural Resources Defense Council; Nature Conservancy; Resources for the Future; Sierra Club; Society of American Foresters; State Farm Insurance; U.S. Chamber of Commerce; U.S. Conference of Mayors; U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service; U.S. Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency; U.S. Department of Interior; U.S. Fire Administration; U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Government Accountability Office; Western Governors Association; WGBH-PBS and the Wilderness Society.

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 that adopt codes choose the International Codes developed by the International Code Council.

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