



USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management

Frequently Asked Questions – Fire Adapted Communities

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Q. What is a fire adapted community?

A. A fire adapted community is a knowledgeable and engaged community, which understands and adapts to wildfire threats by using a variety of mitigation measures to reduce wildfire risk. A community that has adapted to wildfire can more successfully survive fire on the larger landscape with less risk. A fire adapted community utilizes existing programs such as Firewise or Living With Fire, Ready, Set, Go!, Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) and other fire mitigation tools to reduce risk to communities. The success of fire adapted communities relies strongly on partnerships -- people within the community and people outside the community, i.e. federal and state agencies working together to build the community's resiliency to wildfire.

Q: How is this different from existing programs?

A: A fire adapted community is not a program, it is a concept. It bundles mitigation tools and messages into one package that is easier to use, brings more people into the process to help reduce risk, and reinforces and strengthens the need for responsibility at the community level. Most states and local organizations already use many of the fire adapted community strategies - local capacity, defensible space, fuels treatments, mutual aid agreements, prevention, fuel buffers, CWPP's, codes and ordinances but many only use one or two of them. The fire adapted communities strategy stresses mitigation using more of the tools and on a larger scale (the full community not just a neighborhood) and it invites more people to the table to help share responsibility of mitigation;

Q: Is FAC replacing Firewise?

A: No, absolutely not. Firewise is one important component of the fire adapted communities approach. Firewise promotes defensible space in a neighborhood while the fire adapted community concept addresses an entire community and the landscape around it. Fire adapted communities combine Firewise elements with many others (fuel buffers and hazardous fuels mitigation, safe zones, codes and ordinances, Ready, Set, Go! etc.) to address risk on a much larger scale. It is a more comprehensive way to engage more stakeholders to share the responsibility of risk reduction. More people involved in risk reduction using more tools help to create safer communities.

Q: What is my role?

A: As a fire professional who has contact with your local community, you play a critical role by being the catalyst to help those communities reduce their risk. As you interface with communities near your work station, you can share the "all hands, all lands" message of working together to use mitigation tools to collaboratively reduce wildfire risk. You can help form or lead the local coalition or community group that works toward adaptation. You can include the fire adapted communities components in wildfire risk reduction outreach, prevention messages, and in community wildfire protection plans (CWPPS). You can expand the mitigation message to communities and include more tools to help reduce risk. You can help ensure that communities are on the communities at risk list. You can participate in the development of

CWPPs. The fire adapted communities strategy (along with landscape restoration and wildfire response) is part of the National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy and as such has Congressional support as a way to help reduce community risk from wildfires.

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