



## PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

### TASK

To improve building practices, defensible fire zones, emergency access and suppression preparedness and to reduce the incidence of fires through an awareness and education program targeting community decision makers and the public that live and work in wildfire prone areas in the community.

### DESCRIPTION

The goal is to have target audiences implement practices and actions which reduce the impact of wildfire on people and property in the community.

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Planning boards, selectmen, conservation commissions, road agents, building code enforcement officers and developers can learn the need to address wildfire considerations when planning roads, subdivisions and other activities in areas where wildfires can start and spread.
- Residents and businesses in areas where wildfires can start and spread need to be aware of
  - a.) fire safety practices which can reduce the incidence of fire
  - b.) practices which can reduce the susceptibility and severity of fire related injury, loss of life or damage to property.

### GUIDELINES

Design community public awareness programs to target specific audiences when possible. Include calls for action that are desirable.

For example, planning boards and developers may be targeted to provide adequate access in new construction for fire equipment. Also, residents in woodland homes may be targeted to use fire resistant roof shingles and to use landscape practices to create a defensible fire zone. Provide enough information to show the need, consequences of actions and where to get further information.

Components of a program to target community decision makers:

- Schedule personal contacts with community decision makers
- Provide a well prepared verbal presentation
- Provide written materials to add background, details and support
- Make a specific request for action
- Show why the action is good for the community
- Provide additional help in decision making and implementation and provide thanks

Components which may be in a public awareness program:

- Develop a campaign strategy with the goals well clarified
- Develop a relationship with reporters from local papers, radio and TV
- Team up with University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, County Conservation Districts, RC&Ds, and or the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands (DRED) to share resources and public information expertise.

- ❑ Consider the use of:
  - Exhibits and displays
  - Roadside signs
  - Groups, such as scouts, 4-H, garden clubs, service club (using pre-assembled groups saves you the time of organizing people.) Feature articles in local newspaper
  - News releases for Cable TV which offer free time for community activities
  - Local organizations' newsletters public service announcements offered free on radio stations
  - School programs
  - Demonstrations (workshops by themselves or in conjunction with other events in the community)
  - Activities at local and county fairs
  - Displays and or handouts at Town Meetings
  - Open house at the fire department
  - A recognized spokesperson on this issue in the communities
  - Workshops for planning board members, conservation commission members, board of selectmen and developers.
  - Handouts for homeowners distributed at hardware stores and bulk mailing within the community zip code (expensive and doesn't always coincide with community boundaries)
  - Neighborhood programs in fire prone areas

- ❑ A tip:
  - People tend to believe the importance of a topic when they hear the same message from three or more independent sources. Consider using a variety of approaches within the same time period.

## REFERENCES

- Protection of Life and Property from Wild-fire, NFPA 299, 1992 edition, (See Appendix B "Public Fire Safety and Fire Prevention Information/Education"), available from the National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy MA 02269-9101 (617) 770-3000.

## WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

- New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development  
Division of Forests and Lands  
Forest Protection Bureau  
P.O. Box 1856, Concord, NH 03302-1856,  
(603) 271-2217.
- University of New Hampshire  
Cooperative Extension  
Forestry and Wildlife Program  
121 Taylor Hall, 59 College Road,  
Durham, NH 03824, (603) 862-2619, or  
contact the UNH Cooperative Extension  
office in your county. (*See Directory*)
- North Country Resource Conservation  
and Development Area, Inc.  
103 Main Street, Suite 1, Meredith, NH  
03253-9266, (603)279-6546. For Coos,  
Grafton, Carroll and Belknap Counties.
- The U. S. Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
and County Conservation Districts. (*See  
Directory*)

