

# Overcoming Common Barriers to Action

## Talking Points and References to Move Individuals to Mitigate

### **About this Guide**

We are often faced with residents that do not want to mitigate and they give numerous reasons not to. This guide is intended to act as your talking points to help them understand the risk and the value of mitigation.

### **Step One - Assessing the level Of understanding**

Homeowners will not activate unless they are first aware that there is a threat of wildfire. This guide will provide some helpful tips and resources to help you better speak to your neighbors about wildfire and the associated risks.

### **Step Two - Sharing your knowledge**

Homeowners who understand that there is a risk, will want to know more about what their specific risks are. At this phase, plan to share what they can do on their individual property, and to begin dropping hints about how mitigation on their property can benefit the entire community. Let them know what resources are available to help.

### **Step Three - Empowering to Act**

Once homeowners begin taking action on their property, they will certainly recognize that the problem extends beyond their property lines, and this will be a good time to get their ideas and get them engaged in community scale projects. Empower the active resident to act as your spokesperson.

### **Step Four - Continue the Relationship**

Follow up with residents and continue to build the program.

## **WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THE GUIDE**

### **Motivation as a Barrier**

Denial

It is not my Responsibility

Insurance will cover my loss

It will not make a difference

It is not good for the environment

It will look bad

It will be too hard and uncomfortable

I am never at my property

### **Resources Barriers**

It will cost too much

I don't have the time

I don't know what to do

I am physically unable to do the work

It will require too much time to maintain

### **Opportunity Barriers**

The Covenants will not allow it

I rent

I have too small a lot for it to matter

Property is in foreclosure

## Motivation as a Barrier

### **Denial: “I don’t think it is a problem where I live. It couldn’t happen to me. It could never happen here”.**

- Refer individuals to local CWPPs that highlight the area’s risk.
- Review specific risks, fire history and fire ecology of the area.
- [http://ncforestservice.gov/fire\\_control/wildfire\\_statistics.htm](http://ncforestservice.gov/fire_control/wildfire_statistics.htm)
- Leverage the concept of - “it’s not if, but when”
- Use the recent wildfires in the region to highlight the risk.

### **Irresponsibility: “It’s not my job or responsibility, Firefighters are supposed to protect my home from wildfire”.**

- When residential development is exposed to wildfire conditions, numerous houses can ignite and burn simultaneously, overwhelming firefighters and reducing fire protection effectiveness. This means the most important person in protecting a house from wildfire is **NOT** a firefighter, but the property owner.
- Firefighters focus their efforts on properties that are mitigated for their personal safety and because the probability of saving properly mitigated properties is greatly increased relative to unmitigated areas. Ask any fire fighter if they would rather defend a home with an adequate safety zone and escape route or with trees leaning over the drive and house.
- University of Nevada Fire Adapted Communities: <http://www.livingwithfire.info/it-takes-a-community>

### **Insurance: “That’s why I have insurance”.**

- Insurance cannot replace everything and insurance is often inadequate to cover replacement needs.
- Check your policy because some require rebuilding on the same site.
- Here is a good document regarding insurance issues in Colorado <http://www.iii.org/press-release/colorado-fires-a-reminder-that-wildfires-pose-threats-to-life-and-property-well-beyond-california-091510>

## **Futility: “What difference can I make”?**

- Proper mitigation cannot guarantee that your property will not suffer damage; however, it will reduce the risk of property damage.
- Small actions can have large results. Complete a Site Hazard Assessment and you will be surprised. The NC Forest Service’s Individual Assessments Form can be found [here](#).
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- Work from the house out, beginning inside with evacuation preparedness. Eat the elephant one bite at a time or share it by working with your neighbors. More information on defensible space can be found at - [ncfirewise.org](http://ncfirewise.org)



Typical forest conditions. Marion, NC



Wildflower response after a prescribed fire. Photo Credit TNC

### **Motivation as a Barrier**

#### **Environment: “It will be bad for the environment to cut down trees”.**

- Fire once played a very important role helping to keep diseases, insects and overcrowding in check. Fire has been excluded and the forests are out of balance.
- Well-planned and executed projects can restore the forest to a more healthy condition which is good for the ecology & wildlife of the area.
- For more information on the value of forest management visit - <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/catalog/department/36/forestry-environmental-resources>

#### **Aesthetics: “It won’t look good, if all the trees were gone, I wouldn’t want to live here anyway”.**

- Well-spaced trees and tree clumps that are limbed should minimize crown fire activity, and eliminate total fire loss and look park like.
- Property owners often comment after work is completed that they can see more wildlife, and the flowers are amazing. Forest management activities can be aligned with the aesthetic needs of an owner.
- Highlight local demonstration areas that you can show property owners.



Mitigation around a home - Photo Credit NC Forest Service

## Motivation as a Barrier

### **Discomfort: “There are snakes and poison ivy out there, I can’t do the work. Besides, it’s too hot”.**

- Mitigate before or after fire season when temperatures are cooler.
- Coordinate with local stakeholders that may be able to help. The [North Carolina Forest Service](#) and the local [RC & D](#) office have numerous resources.
- Mitigation contractors can do the work.
- Lead by example and partner with neighbors to reduce the cost when possible. The larger the project, the better price you should be able to secure if using a contractor.

### **Absentee: “I don’t want to work on my vacation. I’m not even around for you to tell me that there is a problem. I’m not from here and don’t know enough about wildfires to be concerned”.**

- Always include seasonal and second landowners in any outreach and invite them to participate. It must first be understood that there is an issue.
- When absentee landowners are in the area, have local “Mitigation Champions” engage them.
- Set an example and focus on the rest of the neighborhood next.
- Seek opportunities to help whatever financial or time barriers once the owner understands the issue. Leverage the year-round homeowner’s match to grants, to include work to be done on absentee owners’ property, or host work parties to help them get work done. Anything to show that you want to support them.
- Don’t expect absentee owners to be among the first to take action in your neighborhood. They may come around to recognizing the need more slowly, as they are not regularly presented by the concern.



## Resources Barriers

### **Cost: “I don’t have the money”.**

- How can you afford to do nothing when doing nothing could mean you will lose everything?
- There are simple, inexpensive steps you can take to make your home more fire resistant. Start with the low hanging fruit such as [Home Hardening](#) techniques; maintaining roof free of debris; lean, clean, and green around the home; having a to-go-bag and evacuation plan for your family; have a site assessment to determine the highest priorities for your energy.
- Numerous funding opportunities are available to reduce the financial burden. To learn more visit [http://ncforestservice.gov/fire\\_control/fc\\_cpp.htm](http://ncforestservice.gov/fire_control/fc_cpp.htm)
- [www.ncfirewise.org](http://www.ncfirewise.org)

## Resources Barriers

### Time: “I don’t have the time”.

- There are mitigation contractors who can do the work. Contact the NC Forest Service to obtain a list of local contractors.
- Reducing risk does not have to be done all at once. Start small and expand over time.

### Knowledge: “I don’t know what needs to happen or where to start”.

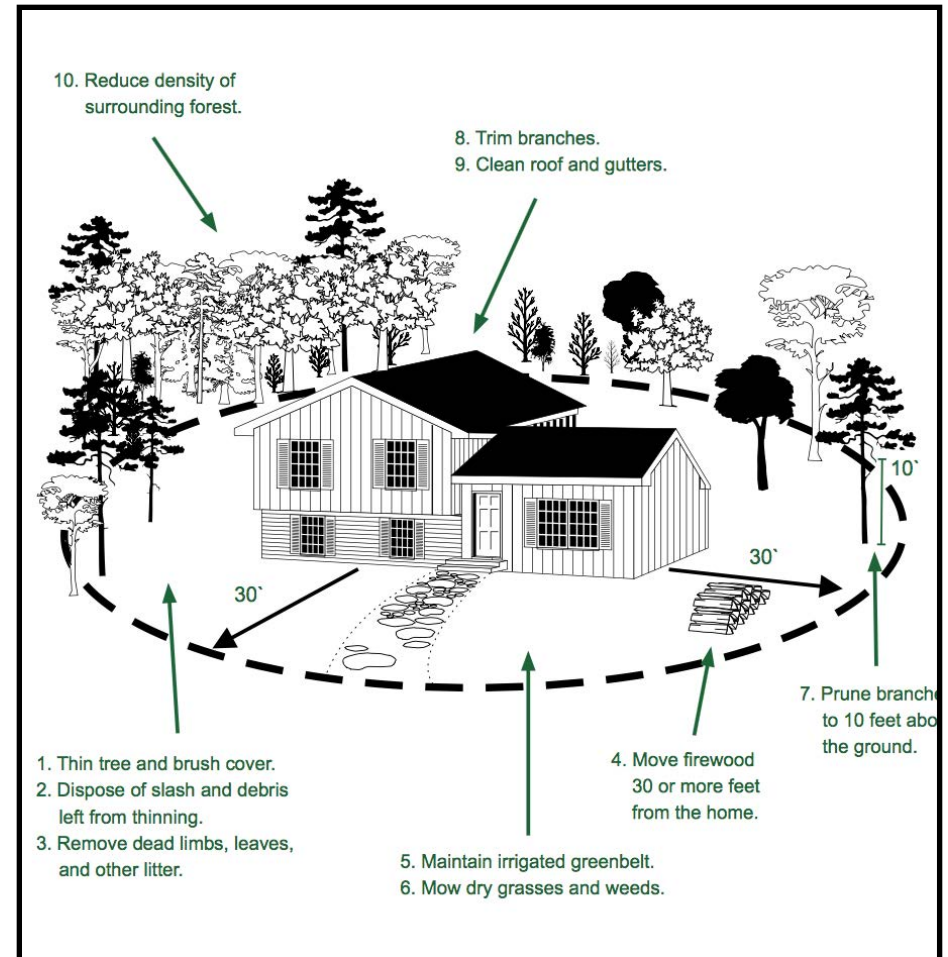
- Complete a site hazard assessment as a starting point.
- Have a County Ranger from the NC Forest Service visit your property
- Contact the local RC& D and request more information @ [appcofac.org](http://appcofac.org).
- [Reducing Fuels on your home site.](#)
- A great resource is the [Firewise Landscaping in North Carolina Handout.](#)

### Physically Unable: “I can’t physically do the defensible space work that needs to be done”.

- Hire a contractor
- Seek service groups looking for projects – Often Church organizations, Scout groups and non-profits provide volunteer resources.
- Neighborhood work parties may be able help. Host a work party – when the work is completed have a potluck event to celebrate the accomplishments.
- Wildfire crosses boundaries – work should as well.
- Working together can create a greater sense of community. Much like the barn raisings of old, numerous people must come together to work towards the common goal of more resilient and safer communities.

### Maintenance: “A lower risk home will be harder or more expensive to maintain”.

- Think of the work as mowing the lawn – it does not take too much time, but will make the property look great and be safer.
- You will have to mow, rake, and clean up every year.
- Considering that your home is likely that largest investment you will ever make, maintenance of the house and the surrounding land ensures you are nurturing that investment.



## Opportunity Barriers

**Illegal (covenants): “I can’t cut trees down in my subdivision without permission. I don’t know when I can cut because there is a protected bird that breeds here”.**

- Often covenants were created when fire was not seen as an issue. The times have changed - Work with your Home Owners Association or community to see what can be done to update these rules.
- Work with partners to address endangered species concerns.

**Rent: “I rent this property and my landlord won’t do anything about it. I don’t know if I am allowed to do anything about it. Besides, why should I, it’s not my house”.**

- Owners and renters alike must understand the risk.
- If a renter is able to do the work it will benefit everyone. Consider incentives, such as cost share programs that could help reduce the cost.
- The cost of mitigation can be prohibitive. If a renter wants to complete fire mitigation work consider giving a rent discount, or paying them.

**Small Lot: “Even if I cleaned up everything on my land, it won’t make a difference unless neighbor Joe does something. Our property is too small to make a difference”.**

- Small actions, such as working to reduce fire vulnerabilities to the structure, can make a difference.
- Others will follow if you set a good example.
- If the house is particularly close to hazardous fuels (including structures), share your concerns with that neighbor. Alternatively, consider adding fire resistant treatments to the affected area of the house.
- Firefighters focus their efforts upon properties that are mitigated for their personal safety and because the probability of saving properly mitigated properties is greatly increased relative to unmitigated areas.
- Small lots completed can lead to large areas of reduced risk.

**Foreclosure: “The banks aren’t going to do anything unless it affects their liability or the marketability of the home”.**

- Most banks aren’t aware that there is a problem. Make them aware if a foreclosure home they own is in your neighborhood. Contact the owner bank and share your concerns.
- Don’t assume that because it is a bank, they won’t want to participate in neighborhood grants or cost-share opportunities.
- Be sure to include the potential increase in the home value and marketability of the home in your discussion with them.

For More information Contact -

Community Mitigation Assistance Team

<https://communitymitigationassistanceteam.wordpress.com>