



International Association of Fire Chiefs

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Defensive Strategy for Local Government Measures to Control Wildland Fire Impacts for Private Property, Open Space Islands, Infrastructure, Watershed, Monuments and Other Community Assets at Risk

Organization and Scope: The IAFC Wildland Fire Policy Committee works on offensive (suppression readiness and response) and defensive strategies (prevention and mitigation of risk) to improve wildland fire management. A subcommittee, led by IAFC Committee Member and Fire Chief Doug MacDonald from Los Alamos, New Mexico Fire Department, has been formed to plan for and accomplish improved defensive strategies. This document describes the strategy to be used to accomplish higher levels of defensive readiness for local government readiness.

Vision: The IAFC Wildland Fire Policy committee seeks collaboration and partnership from public and private agencies to support a local government defensive strategy in managing the Wildland Urban Interface and Intermix (WUI). This collaboration will lead to a productive working relationship between local, state and federal government stakeholders to include governmental leaders, individuals within WUI communities, builders, planners, developers, fire service, environmental protection, insurance, resource conservation, business and industry. This relationship will result in stronger policies and implementation actions related to building standards, land use policies and fuels management in the WUI.

Strategy: We seek support of this strategic plan by the IAFC Board of Directors, all of the IAFC regional fire service leadership and each local fire jurisdiction that has a local area wildland fire threat. The strategy also requires the support of the leadership of the National Association of State Foresters, National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities with hopes that they will partner with the IAFC and support this "call to action" for stronger policies and implementation actions related to building standards, land use policies and fuels management. The recommended changes created by the leadership of cities and counties will be strong enough to provide adequate life safety and asset protection to all populations and community assets within local government jurisdiction that is at risk of devastation by wildland fire. The minimum levels of WUI protection will be defined in a way that will provide the local fire chief, planning director, city manager and/or county administrator sample ordinances and examples of wildland fire policies and planning documents to accomplish improved prevention, mitigation and preparation for response to the local WUI challenges. We will identify and recommend the utilization of federal support available from those agencies that implement the National Fire Plan, 10 Year Implementation Plan created by the Western Governors, and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. We intend to seek the endorsement of other national and local groups, such as insurance, builders, environmental, and developer groups.

Goals:

- Use the experiences from successful national programs such as Fire Wise, fire sprinkler coalition, hazardous materials management policy and program activities and the recycle of solid waste programs to pattern actions to gain momentum to attain this Strategic Plan.
- Identify and document “best management” plans, practices and recommendations to be contained in a reference binder for leaders to use when addressing local WUI issues.
- Attain success stories and define measurable improvement activities to assure progress in meeting the Strategic Plan desired outcomes.
- Attain signature endorsement by state and federal governmental leaders for recommended policy and planning direction on environmental issues and other state and federal laws that may have cross jurisdictional concern on WUI management practices used by local leaders within their local government jurisdiction.
- Encourage that every community in the United States that has any WUI risk develop Community Fire Protection Plans that defines the level and location of WUI risk and the prioritized recommended changes that would improve WUI readiness.
- Support the effort of local level leaders to define their Interface and Intermix areas – encourage the minimum and maximum recommended planning activities and program activities to address the prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures needed to address community assets, water shed, infrastructure, open space areas (regional parks), monuments, etc. (focus for high, medium and low level WUI risk scenarios).
- Support and encourage the federal grants and process actions needed to encourage effective risk management processes/tools for the development of community wildland fire plans, biomass fuels utilization, federal agency endorsement of fuels reduction processes, and grant funding for priority fuels reduction activities; specific concern for green waste, smoke management, and inexpensive removal of targeted wildland fuels.
- Define the methods of motivating local level action on the minimum recommended WUI management standards that should be accomplished by a local government. The best motivation comes from local government peer relationships and from within the organization, rather than by unilateral moves by state and federal government. Although we are prepared to develop recommendations that cause action at the local level should all other cooperative measures fail.
- Educate, motivate and activate local community and governmental leaders; from planning directors, insurance industry, chamber of commerce, and fire chiefs on the strategy and method of gaining local support for the WUI defensive strategy; also support the Fire Safe/Firewise approach to committing the public to a vision of improved WUI defensive strategy management.