

## **Wildfire Risk Management Starts with Communities**

#ProtectYours from wildfire with these resources provided by the [International Association of Fire Chiefs](#), Intertribal Timber Council, [National Association of Counties](#), [National Association of State Foresters](#), and [National League of Cities](#).

It doesn't matter what time of year it is, there are always communities preparing for, actively mitigating, fighting, or recovering from wildfire.

The 2019 fire year has begun and the risk of wildfire disasters will no doubt continue to build as summer approaches. Even with record snowfall in the western United States, the region's multi-year drought continues in some states. In those that have had more precipitation, wildfire risk will increase due to the potential for significant vegetation growth which can provide ample fuel for drier summer and fall wildfires. Areas that have suffered damage from other natural disasters are also at higher risk due to changed landscapes and larger fuel loads.

These and other contributing variables will make 2019 another significant fire year, capable of taking unprepared lives, destroying tens of thousands of homes and scarring hundreds of thousands to millions of acres.

Over the last decade, states, local governments, and tribes have worked together with our federal partners to cohesively address wildland fire challenges that threaten each of our unique values at risk. To support these efforts in 2019, the [International Association of Fire Chiefs \(IAFC\)](#), Intertribal Timber Council, [National Association of Counties \(NACo\)](#), [National Association of State Foresters \(NASF\)](#), and [National League of Cities \(NLC\)](#) have teamed up to share smart planning and mitigation resources directly with communities at risk.

All communities *can* adapt to life with wildfire risk when they have the necessary tools to properly mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildland fire incidents.

**1. Are your fire and emergency response leaders prepared for the 2019 fire year?** The IAFC's new WUI Chiefs Guide (URL) provides resources and best management practices specific to wildfire preparedness for use by wildfire and emergency managers of all levels of experience.

**2. Have your emergency management and response agencies engaged in pre-season planning?** Before implementation, review your [Community Wildfire Protection Plan \(CWPP\)](#) or equivalent plan to be sure it:

- Identifies wildland fire response capabilities and stakeholders for unified command
- Provides plans for evacuation and shelters for people and animals
- Establishes priorities and action plans
- Identifies timelines for future opportunities and community risk needs
- Establishes joint information centers

For more information on wildland fire preparedness [visit FEMA's website](#).

**3. Do your residents have access to and participate in wildfire preparedness and education activities?** Are your emergency planning and response agencies conducting outreach to community members to

promote personal and community preparedness and risk-reduction programs such as [Ready, Set, Go!](#) and [Firewise?](#)

Readying for a disaster like wildfire requires engagement, commitment and careful community-wide planning on the part of first responders and residents alike. Ensuring residents know their community's evacuation routes and procedures, have mitigated the risk of fire damage to their homes, and have a [personal action plan](#) in place will improve the outcome of a wildland-fire event.

**4. Do your response agencies have mutual-aid agreements for closest-response resources?** These agreements among emergency response agencies allow responders to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries on request or continual basis and are critical to ensuring necessary resources are readily available for suppressing wildfire as safely and efficiently as possible.

Local government officials can ensure mutual-aid agreements are in place by requesting documentation from their city, county, tribal emergency-services director, local fire or police chief, or state forester.

**5. Are the necessary processes in place to declare local emergencies and request assistance from state and federal resources?** Be sure all stakeholders know what their respective roles are after an emergency declaration. Ensuring your city, county, or tribe knows who to call at the state level for support when a response to a disaster exceeds local capabilities can save precious time.

Many state emergency management agencies provide sample emergency declaration codes and may be able to provide technical assistance in updating your city or county codes. You can find the contact information for your state's emergency management agency on [FEMA's website](#). The 2019 fire year is underway. Make sure your community is prepared when wildland fire strikes.

Looking for additional information? Check out these websites:

- [IAFC.org/wildland](#)
- [WildlandFireRSG.org](#)
- [Firewise.org](#)
- [FireAdaptedNetwork.org](#)
- [StateForesters.org](#)
- [NACo County Wildfire Playbook](#)

