



# Tailoring the Firewise® Concepts to Your Community

Paul Ohlenbusch  
Training Coordinator

Dan Dodson  
Education Coordinator



# Who Are We?

Dan - Volunteer Firefighter, Emergency Services  
Commissioner (1985 – 2010)

Paul – Formerly Extension Grazingland  
Management Specialist, Kansas State University  
(1975-2003)



# What is Sun City Texas?

Sun City Texas is a retirement community in Georgetown, Texas established in 1995.

Currently, there are approximately 7,200 rooftops on 4,100 acres.

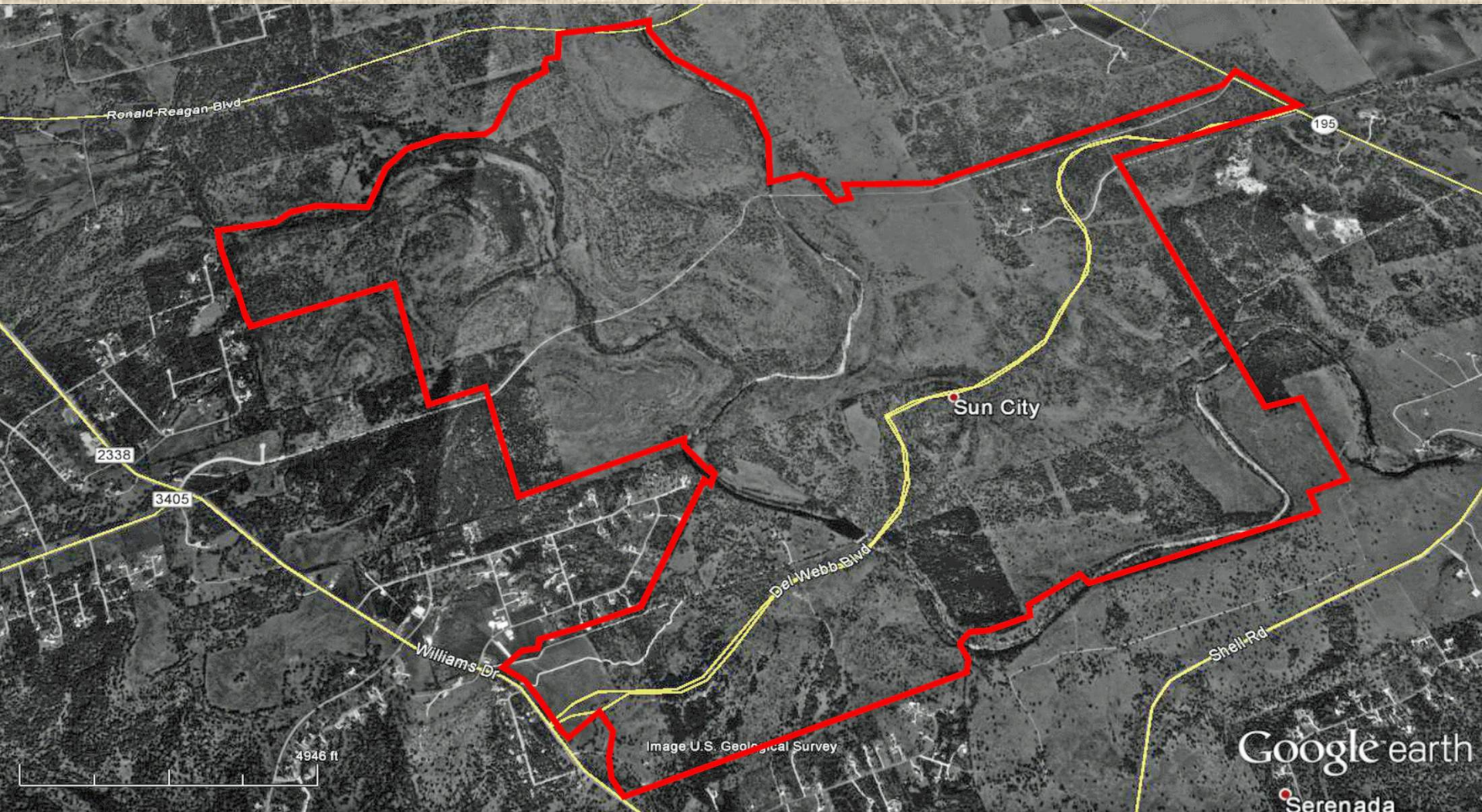
Expansion will increase the rooftops to 10,000 on about 5,000 acres.

Approximately 20% of the area is in native common areas.





# Sun City 1995

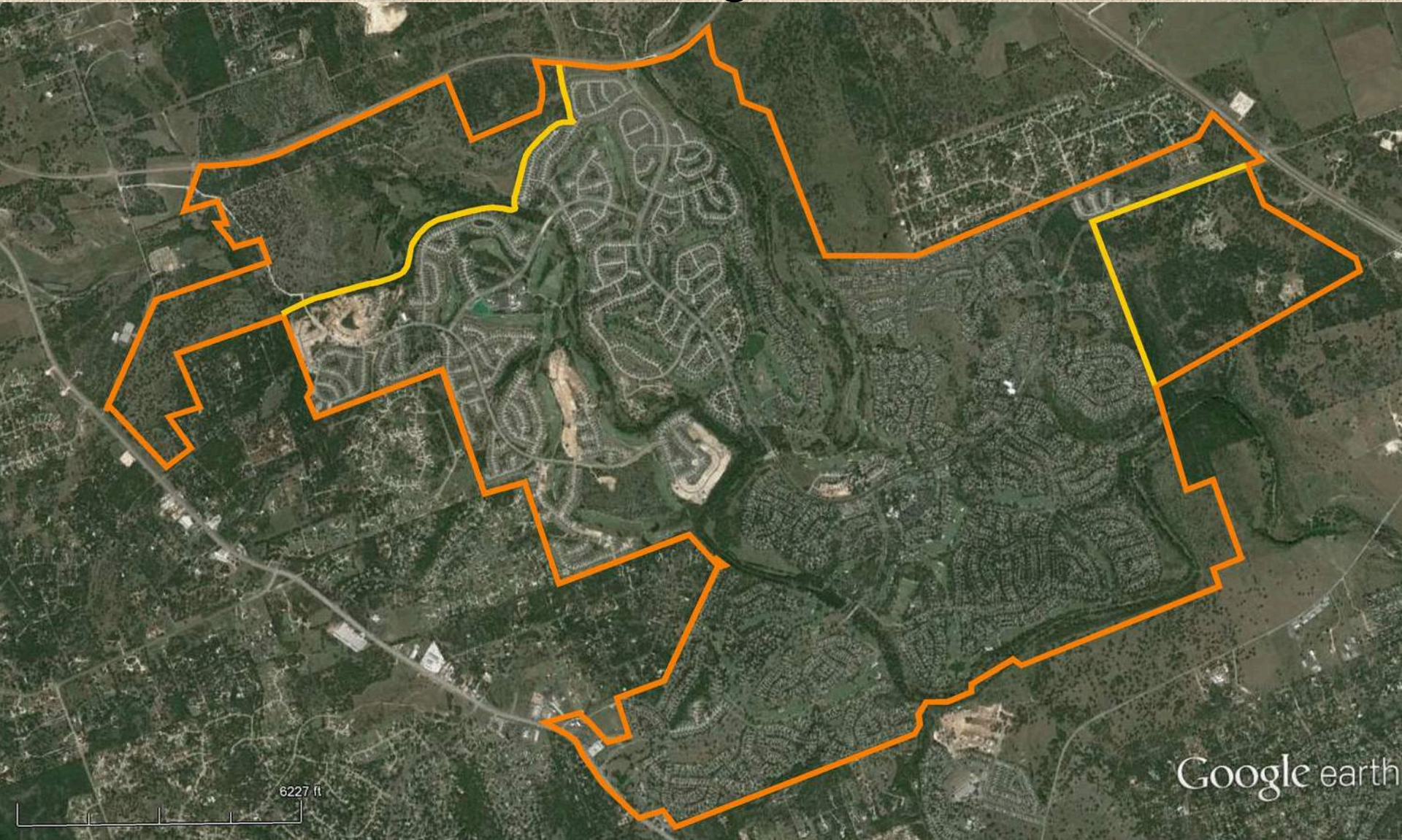


**Sun City Texas was originally overgrazed ranch land in 1995.**





# Sun City 2014



6227 ft

Google earth

**Sun City will build out at 10,000 rooftops on 5,000 acres**





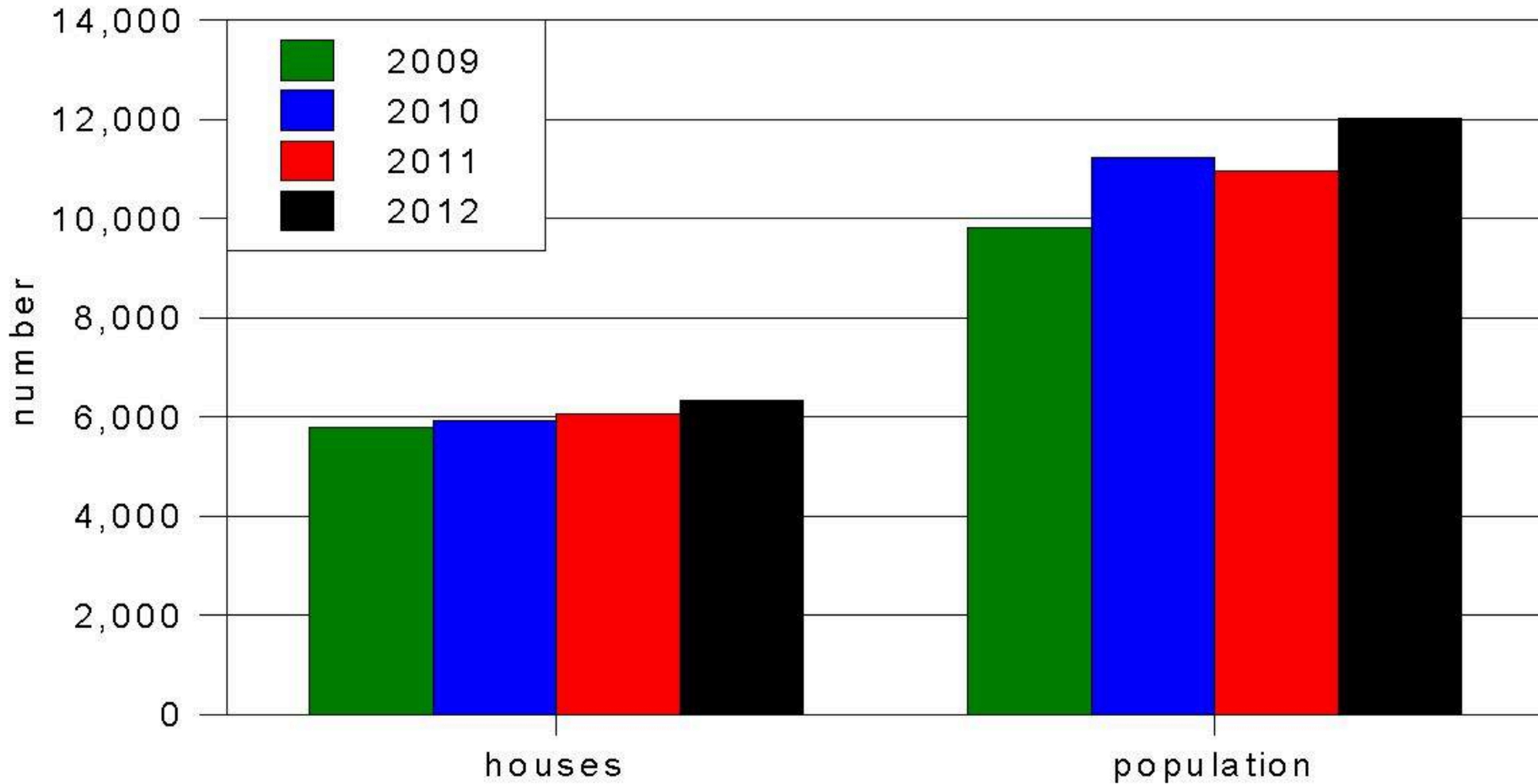
# Sun City Firewise

- **Educate residents about dangers from wildfire**
- **Inform residents of steps that may be taken to reduce loss**
- **Train Home Ignition Zone Evaluators to conduct evaluations**
- **Train Landscape vendors in Firewise concepts**
- **Reduce the potential for wildfire in native areas**
- **Stay abreast of latest information about wildfires and their effects**



# Demographics

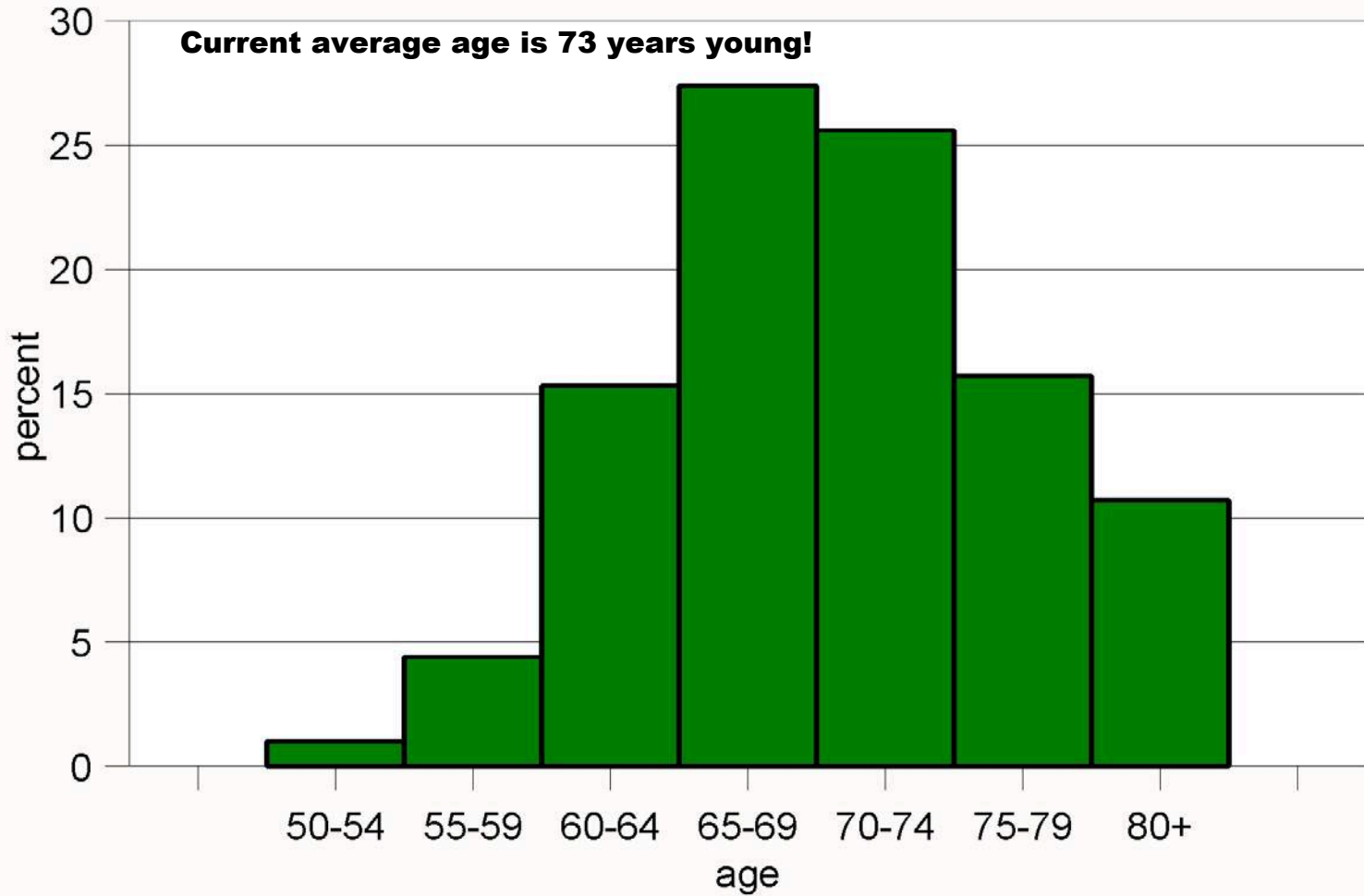
## Residents and Houses



**Sun City has steadily grown in houses and people.**

# Demographics

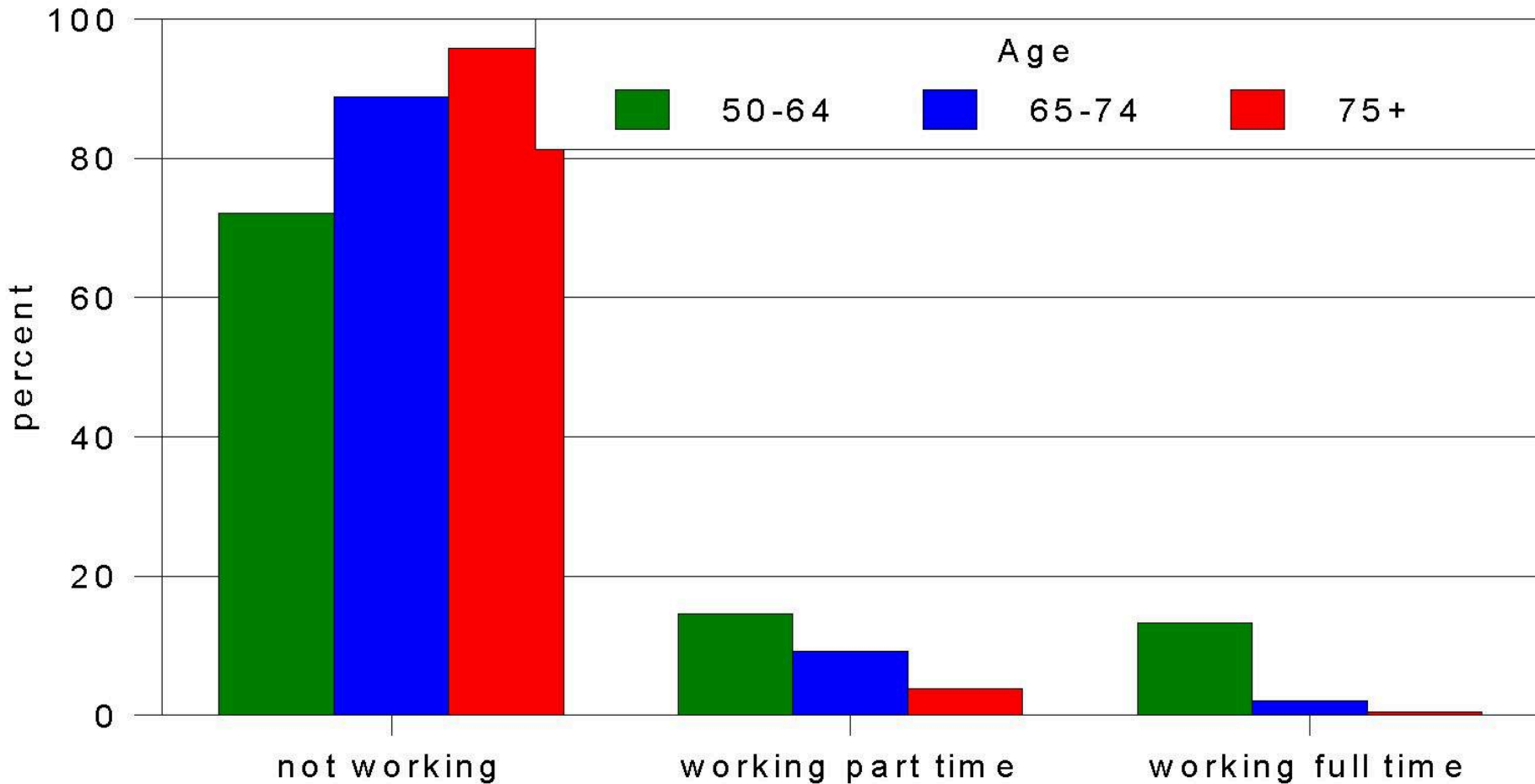
## Age of Residents





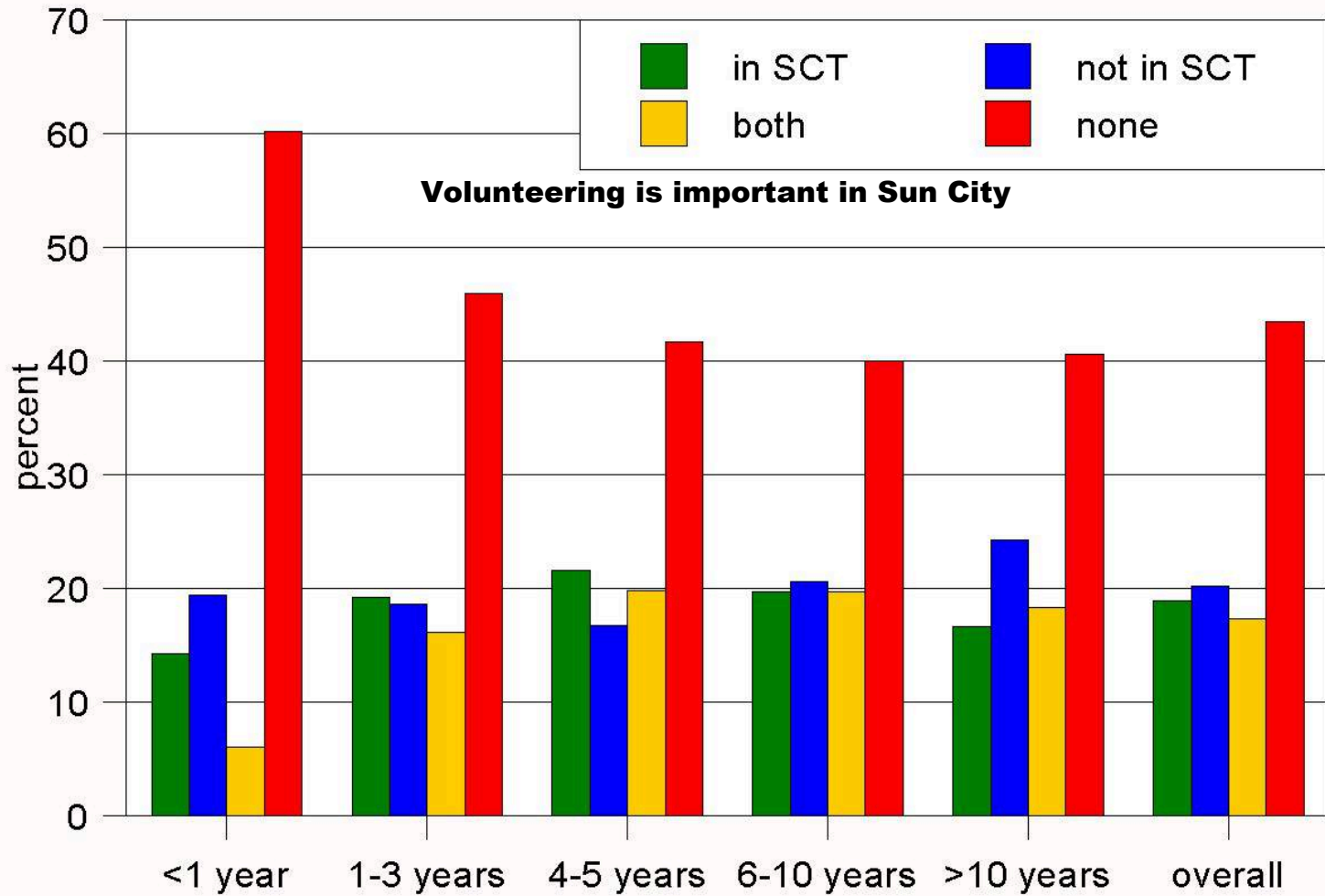
# Demographics

## Employment Status



# Demographics

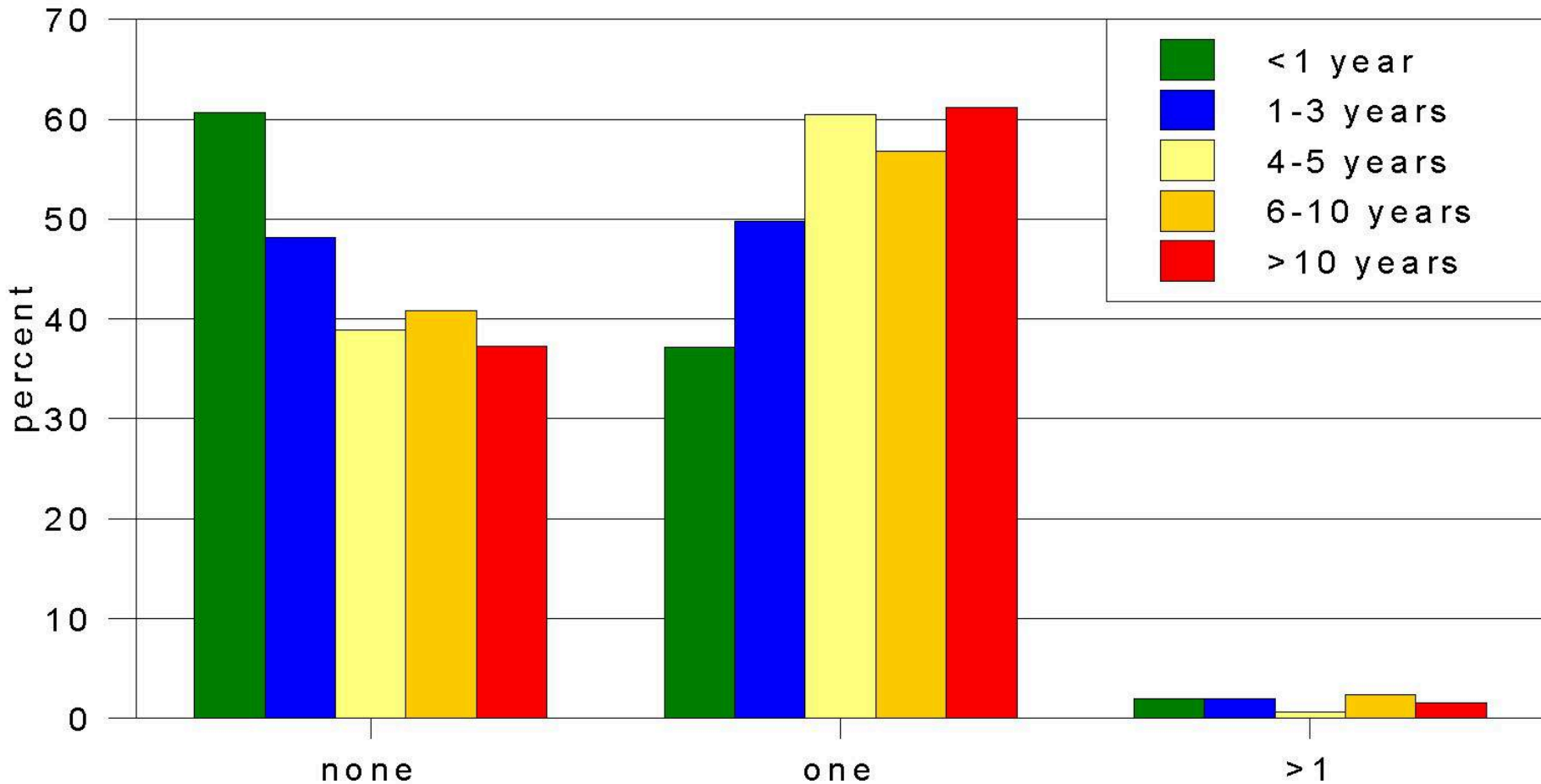
## Volunteering





# Demographics

## Golf Carts Owned



# Defensible Space Concept



**The Firewise model does not fit the urban/suburban areas. Modifications are needed**





**Applying the general Firewise model includes several other property owners.**



Moving toward a  
**DEFENSIBLE  
NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Survivable Space**

**The more houses that are maintain in a  
"Firewise" condition the better!**

© 2011 Google

© 2010 Google™

208 ft

Imagery Date: 3/9/2011

30°43'17.62"N 97°42'20.11"W elev 793 ft

Eye alt 1683 ft



**Sun City Texas  
Firewise Group**  
Sun City Texas Community Association



# Sun City Texas History

- 2005 - 12 acre wildfire
- 2007 - June flood (some clearing)
- 2008 - Process begun by the Wildlife Management and Property & Grounds
- 2010 - September 7 flood (some clearing)
- 2011 – Bastrop and Steiner Ranch fires
  - Some clearing began
- Property & Grounds, Wildlife Management, Emergency Management, Firewise proposed the program
- Board of Directors approved
- Clearing started and continues and maintenance management must continue to maintain the resource





# Goals of the Flood, Wildfire, and Wildlife Habitat Program

**Reduce wildfire potential**

**Improve wildlife habitat diversity**



**Reduce Flooding Potential**





# What are the Programs Goals?

1. Safety for LIFE First!

Residents, staff, and others

2. Protect property SECOND!

Residents homes, CA buildings

3. Manage the common areas to reduce the potential for damage by flooding and wildfire and develop a diverse wildlife habitat.

Habitat Goal: Closed Canopy Hardwood Forest with Mid & Low Canopy.





2007 Flood



2005 Fire



2011 Fire



# Sun City Texas Firewise Organization

## Firewise Group – Subcommittee of Emergency Management Committee

- HIZ Evaluation Work Group
- Education Work Group
- Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew
- CWPP/Re-certification Work Group





# Communications

**We use many different ways to reach residents.**

**CITY WEEK**  
THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF SUN CITY ■ GEORGETOWN, TEXAS ■ JULY 21, 2013

Sun Citians enjoy games of social bridge

PAGE 5



Photo by C. Wayne Dawson

Dan Dodson, education coordinator for the Firewise Committee, on the Mockingbird trail on Saturday, July 13.

## Firewise Committee strives to protect Sun City

By C. WAYNE DAWSON

### Managing Sun City

An on-going series looking at the committees and sub-committees dedicated to maintaining and improving the retirement community

**D**an Dodson, education coordinator for Firewise Committee, walked to the bottom of Sun City's Mockingbird Trail on Saturday, July 13. It was late morning, and despite the shade of the nearby forest, the temperature was climbing to 100 degrees.

Mr. Dodson pointed uphill toward a clearing made by volunteers called a fuel break. It led to the backside of Neighborhood 38.

"Fires love to travel up a north-facing hill like this one when a southern breeze pushes it," he said. "The heat naturally rises and creates its own wind,

then dries the trees in front of it."

The Firewise Committee's focus, he explained, is to assess vegetation, topography, and weather conditions that can lead to a fire. Its mission is to protect the "people, property and natural resources" of the community.

When asked how many people volunteer for firewise duty, Mr. Dodson said that about a dozen show up regularly to clear underbrush and combustible vegetation, and are sometimes supplemented by others who live in the immediate neighborhood.

But that is not enough, he said.

Continued on 2

## After heavy Texas rains, preparing for worst

### Weather expert dispenses advice during storms

By C. WAYNE DAWSON

Last January, at a Kiwanis meeting in Sun City's ballroom, National Weather Service Warning Coordination Meteorologist Paul Yura showed a photo of a young couple whose hair stood on end.

"When your hair does this, run for cover," he said. "Violent lightning and thunder might just be around the corner."



**Paul Yura**  
Warning Coordination Meteorologist

Mr. Yura spent the next half-hour educating the audience about how to prepare for the thunderstorms and other violent weather that Central Texans can expect to encounter.

Like a stock market analyst predicting an inevitable correction, Mr. Yura cautioned that the region is currently running a rain deficit and at some point will rebalance itself with flooding.

Continued on 4





# Communications



- ✓ Weekly CA Communicator - weekly
- ✓ Trumpet Newsletter - monthly
- ✓ Sun Rays - monthly
- ✓ HIZ Evaluations - as requested
- ✓ Town Hall - annual
- ✓ Wildfire Preparedness Day - annual



# Partners



**Sun City Texas**  
**Firewise Group**

Sun City Texas Community Association



EST. 1848  
**GEORGETOWN**  
TEXAS

The logo for the Sun City Texas Community Association features a stylized orange and yellow sun icon to the left of the text "Sun City Texas Community Association".

Sun City Texas  
Community Association



# Resources

General materials applicable in the US Wildlands/Urban Interface (WUI)

- NFPA Codes and Standards (nfpa.org)
  - NFPA 1141 –Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Wildland, Rural, and Suburban Areas
  - NFPA 1144 –Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire
- Firewise website (firewise.org)
- Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) (<http://disastersafety.org/>)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) ‘Ready, Set, Go’ (.iafc.org)
- USDA Forest Service – Jack D. Cohen, Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory (firelab.org/)
- Other materials especially those found in internet searches
- Training Workshops

Regional and State materials

- State Forest Services
- State specific statutes and regulations





# Gutter Eating Tree!



**We find many unusual features  
around houses and sometimes  
are ask for solutions!**



# Create Your Own Program

- Research your community
  - Your hazards
  - Your resources
  - Your partners
- Develop your beginning plan
- Let the plan evolve

# Where Does Firewise Fit?

- Should not stand alone!
- Combine with other community management goals
- It is an EDUCATION process

**Our program has been the result of working with other advisory committees, staff, and Board of Directors to build a management program where Firewise is an important part.**





# Sun City's Approach

- What areas of management does your community have?
- Are the areas related?
- Can they be merged?
- What resources are available?
  - Firewise resources
  - Volunteers
  - Staff
  - Consultants
  - Contractors

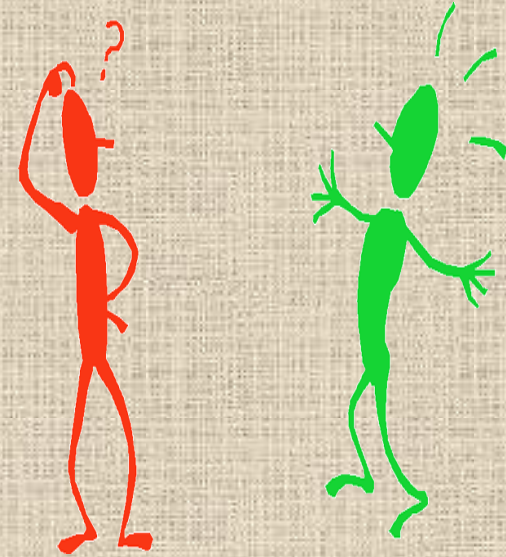


# Resource Sources

**THE AMOUNT OF MATERIAL IS  
OVERWHELMING.**

**MY COMMUNITY IS NOT THE SAME AS  
THOSE IN OTHER PARTS OF THE  
COUNTRY.**

**HOW DO I COPE?**



**DON'T' GIVE UP!**

**REMEMBER, THE MATERIALS  
WERE DEVELOPED FOR THE  
GENERAL SITUATION**

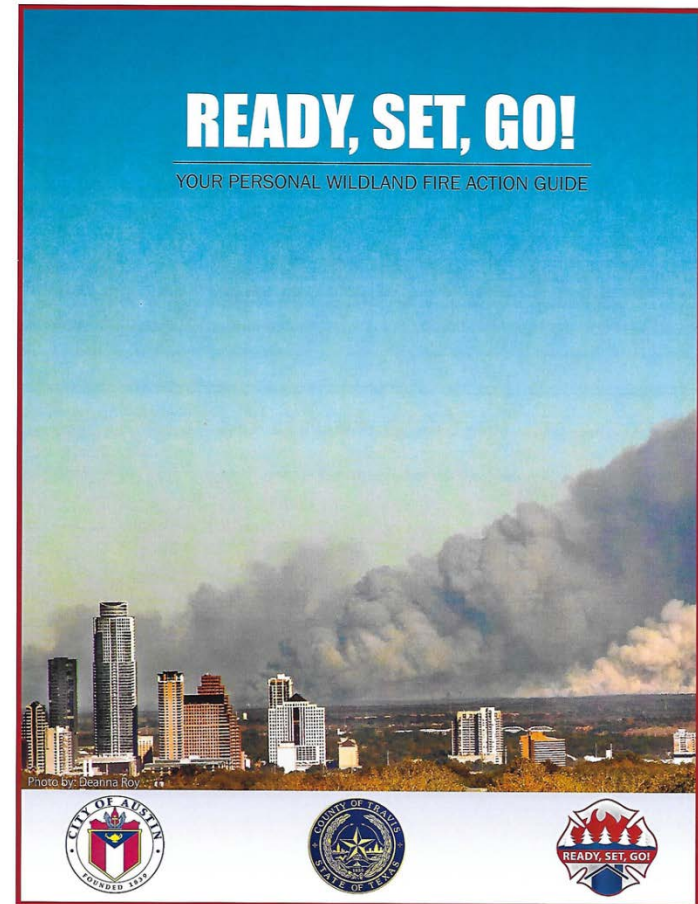
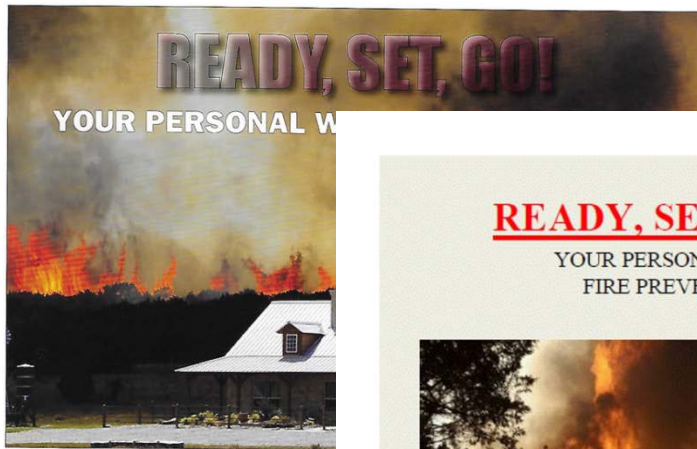
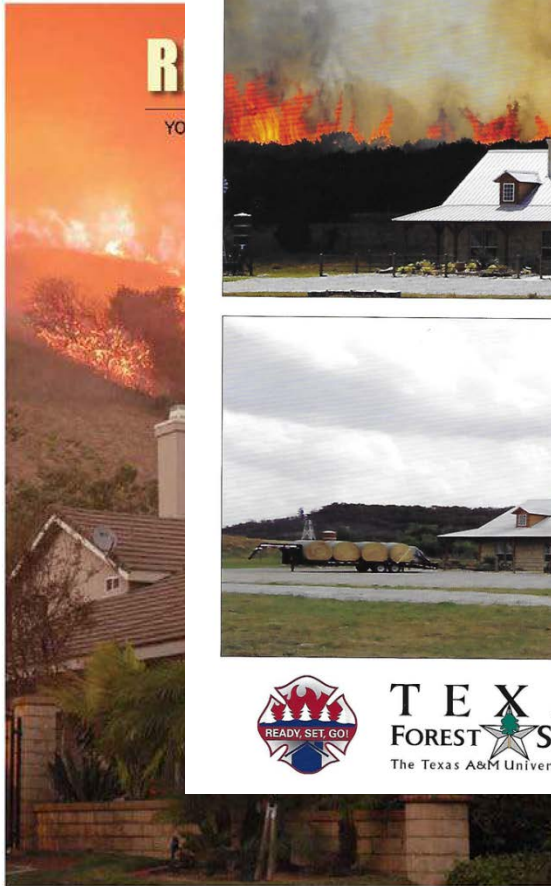


# Assess your local situation

- Do you have a rural heavily forested community, a suburban environment with interspersed areas of forest, or somewhere in between?
- Are there local rules and guidelines that affect what you might consider?
- Do you have volunteer resources that can assist in development and implementation?
- Do you have access to media resources?
- Do you have other factors that might be used?
- Can you get widespread community support?
  - Property Owners
  - Homeowners Association
  - Fire Department
  - Local Government
  - Other stakeholders
- What are your available financial resources?
- Do you have a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in place?



# Create Your Own Materials



An example of how a national document has been adapted to meet the needs of the area.





# Firewise USA

1144

NFPA® 1144  
Standard for  
Reducing Structure  
Ignition Hazards from  
Wildland  
2013 Edition

NFPA®, 1 Batterymarch Park, PO Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269  
An International Codes and Standards Organization


1141

NFPA® 1141  
Standard for  
Fire Protection Infrastructure  
for Land Development  
in Wildland, Rural,  
and Suburban Areas  
2012 Edition

NFPA®, 1 Batterymarch Park, PO Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101, USA  
An International Codes and Standards Organization

**Assessing Wildfire Hazards  
in the Home Ignition Zone**

STUDENT HANDOUT



NFPA

**NFPA has materials that can be used as resources or even training is available.**





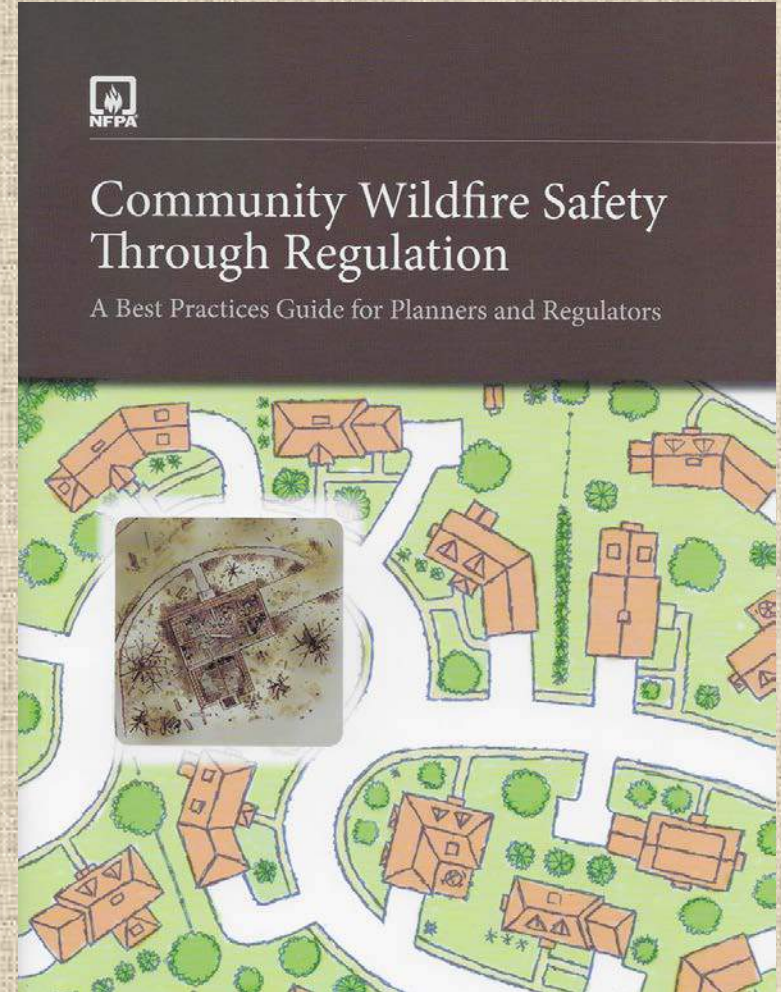
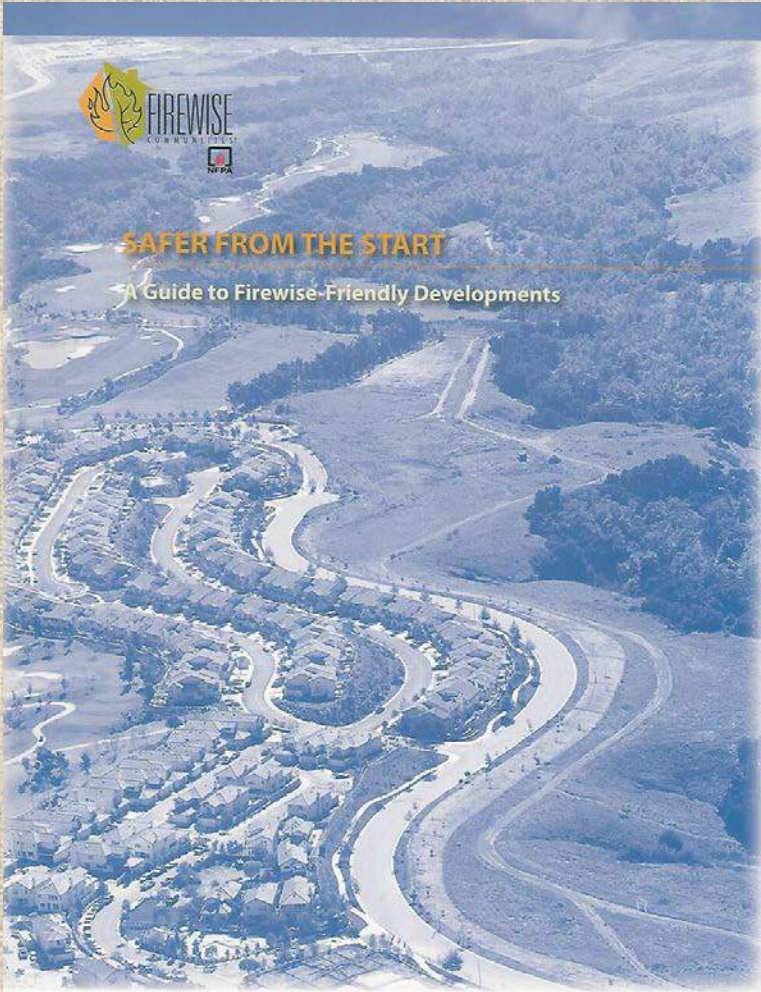
# Firewise USA



**Videos are available from several sources and can help develop programs and materials.**



# Firewise USA



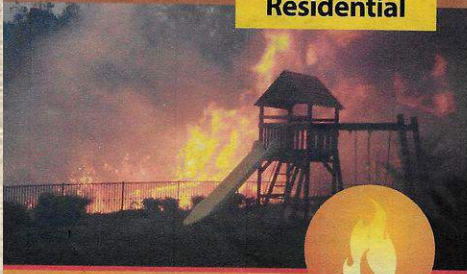
**Materials are available for developers and local government.**





# REDUCING WILDFIRE RISK

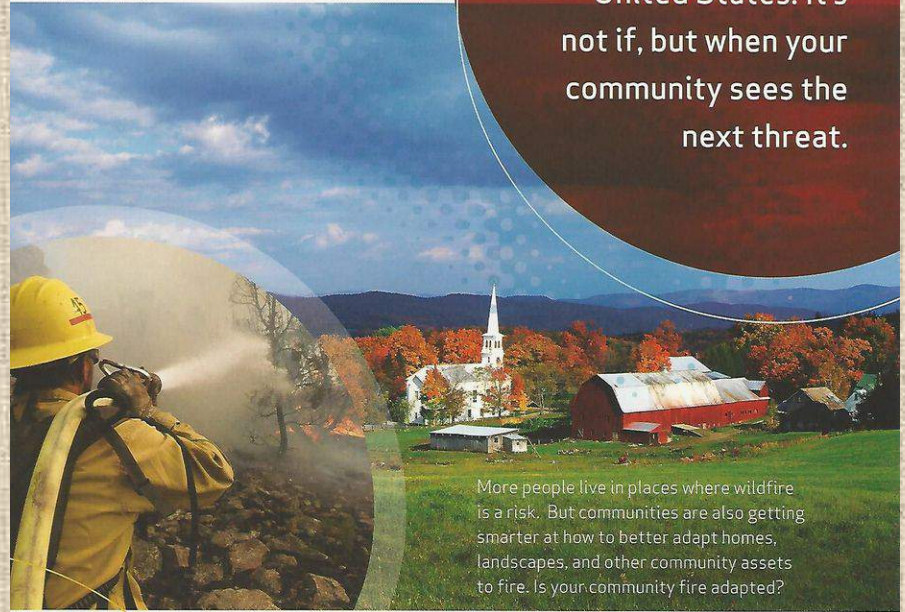
## Residential



According to recent statistics, one-third of U.S. homes are located in the Wildland Urban

Interface (WUI), areas where wildland vegetation (forest or woodland, brush / shrub or grassland) meets residential development. In recent years, homes in these areas have become casualties of hard-to-control wildfires. Even if you are located outside the boundaries of the WUI, you can sustain significant fire damage. Burning embers can be blown into the area, well ahead of the fire front, and can start fires by landing on combustible parts of the building and near-home combustible vegetation and materials. Deck and patio furniture, gutters, awnings, wood piles, and areas where pine needles or leaves accumulate are some of the places where embers can collect and ignite your home or another building on your property.

Insurance Institute  
for Business & Home  
Safety



Every year wildfires burn across the United States. It's not if, but when your community sees the next threat.

More people live in places where wildfire is a risk. But communities are also getting smarter at how to better adapt homes, landscapes, and other community assets to fire. Is your community fire adapted?

Get started today by using the tools available through the Fire Adapted Communities program. Visit [www.fireadapted.org](http://www.fireadapted.org) – your link to information and resources to help you, your neighbors, and your entire community reduce wildfire risk.


**National groups have materials to help develop information and materials.**

Fire Adapted Communities







**Will your home SURVIVE?**



**Will your home SURVIVE?**



*Theirs did not.*



*Thanks to survivable space, theirs did survive.*



**TEXAS FOREST SERVICE**  
The Texas A&M University System

**Homeowner's "Watch Outs!"**

*Will Your Home Survive?* The Homeowner's "Watch Outs!" will allow you to evaluate your situation and set a plan to correct any concerns.

Each year, hundreds of homes are destroyed or damaged by wildland fires. If you live, or plan on living in an area subject to wildland fires, it is your responsibility to protect your family and home from danger.

You live in rural areas because you like the life-style and beauty. You do not have to live in a steel building or bunker to be safe. The two most important things you can do to protect your family and home is to have at least 30-feet between your home and the surrounding wildland fuels AND have a roof that will not burn.




The key is in reducing the ignition potential of your home. That means, to make it compatible with its surroundings by considering these factors:

- **Fuels** (natural and ornamental)
- **Topography** (slope, canyons and draws)
- **Your Home** (construction, design and materials)
- **Access** (roads and bridges)
- **Family Protection** (evacuation plans)

You can live safely in the woods, if you take some simple steps to protect your family and home. *It is YOUR responsibility to protect yourself and your family.*

Texas Forest Service  
**Wildfire Safety**



**Your Family Is Depending On It!**

**Burning trash or brush piles**

First, call your local sheriff's department to make sure there is not a burn ban. It's best to postpone all burning until the fire danger has subsided. Even when conditions have improved, avoid burning debris on dry, windy days. Burn debris in barrels with metal screens or in small piles in areas cleared of vegetation. Stay with the fire until it is completely extinguished. Have a shovel and water handy.

**Protecting your home**

Keep your yard mowed closely and remove all trash, brush and combustible materials from within a 30-foot radius of your home. Contact your local fire department or the Texas Forest Service for ways to make your home safer from wildfire.

**Driving**

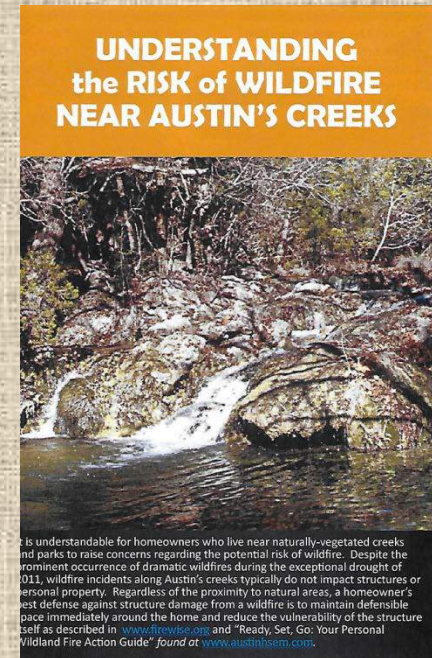
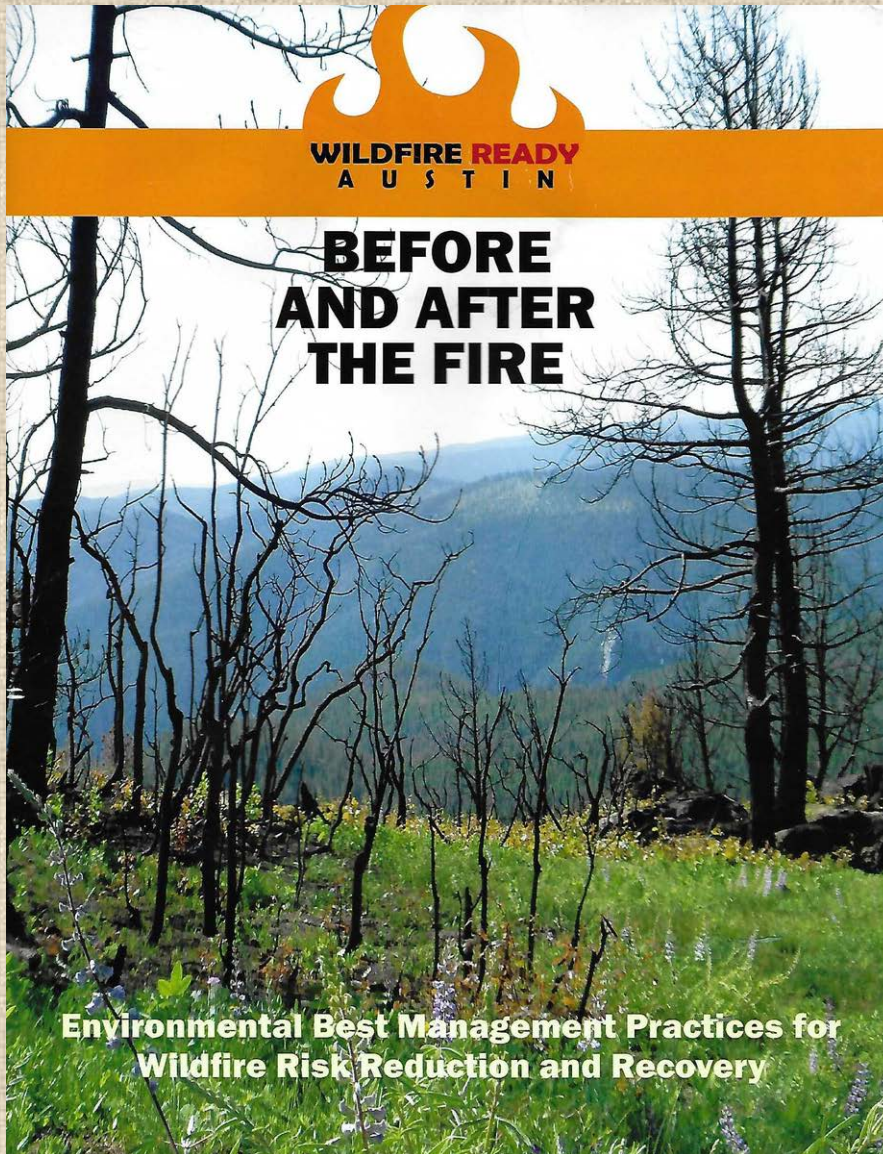
Hot catalytic converters and exhaust systems can cause wildland fires. Park and drive only in areas free of dry vegetation. Dragging chains cause sparks, so be careful when towing.

**State agencies may also have materials available.**





# Wildfire Ready Austin





# We Create Our Own Materials

## Firewise Plant Guide

Providing Information About Drought-tolerant, Deer Resistant, Flammability, and other information

2015

Prepared by  
Sun City Texas Firewise Group

There is no such thing as a "fireproof" landscape (unless it is completely covered in concrete), but there are landscapes that are "Firewise" and can help prevent the spread of fire and damage.

All information in this publication was from USDA Plants Data Base, Communities USA, Native and Landscapes Plants, and other sources.



Updated January

## FIREWISE TRUMPET



Volume 2 October 2015 Number 9

### In This Issue:

October Calendar  
Firewise Group  
Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Numbers  
Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew  
Firewise 2015 Virtual  
Trees, Shrubs, Houses, and Embers

### Firewise Group

The Firewise Group met September 23 with 12 members present. The HIZ Evaluation numbers were reviewed (see HIZ Numbers).  
October 29<sup>th</sup> is the date for HIZ Training and Refresher Course. Refresher course is 1/2 day, while a full day is required for initial HIZ training.  
The re-certification process will begin in October. Please keep track of your time promoting Firewise in your neighborhoods and organizations. Time spent on HIZ Evaluations and events are being tracked separately.  
Next Meeting is October 29, 1 pm, Activities Center MR 3-4.

### Firewise Town Hall October 6

It was Fire Prevention Week and we highlighted it in this year's Town Hall! Will Boettner, Texas A&M Forest Service, started with an update on what is going on with Firewise in Texas and across the nation. Lt. Lane Mills, Georgetown Fire Department, discussed smoke and carbon monoxide detectors from the theme "Hear the BEEP where you SLEEP."

The major topic was the influence the 'Wildfire, Flood, and Wildlife Habitat Management Program.' It has changed wildlife habitat and is meeting Firewise goals. Warren Bluntzer, Sun City's Wildlife Biologist, and Paul Ohlenbusch, Training Coordinator, reviewed the history and changes of the habitat condition and what the changes could mean for wildlife. Dan Dodson, Education Coordinator, finished with a brief review of upcoming Firewise events and efforts.

You can view the Town Hall by [clicking here](#)

### Our Partners



Click logo for information

### October Calendar

October 6, 9:30 am, SCB - Firewise Town Hall  
October 15, 10 am, AC R1 - Education Work Group  
October 28, 1 pm, AC MR 3-4 - Firewise Group  
October 29, 9 am, HIZ Training and Continuing Education

### November Calendar

November 15 - Firewise Certification Due  
November 19, 8:30 am, SCB - New Resident Orientation  
November 19, 10:00 am, MR1 - Education Work Group

**No Firewise Group Meeting in November!**  
**December Calendar**  
December 2, 1 pm, MR 3-4 - Firewise Group

### Major Event Dates for 2015

October 29, 2015 - HIZ Training and Continuing Education

### 2015 Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew

The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew will renew their efforts when fall weather returns, possibly this month. Interested in volunteering? [Click here!](#)

### Firewise Group Leadership

Chair - Tom Kissinger  
Vice-Chair - Barry Harding  
Secretary - Roger Dennen  
Education Coordinator - Dan Dodson  
Training Coordinator - Paul Ohlenbusch

### Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Numbers

The HIZ completion status:		
Month ending	8/31	9/30
Received	756	756
Completed	728	728
Open	28	28
On hold	1	1

The Firewise web site is available.

[click here](#)

The Firewise Trumpet is published monthly except January. If you have information to share, please send it to HIZA@juddenlink.net by the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month.

## Being Firewise Around Your Home

In 2009, Sun City Texas earned the status of Certified Firewise Community, a voluntary program administered through the Texas Forest Service. The receipt of this certification saved the community 15% on property insurance premium costs in 2010. The Firewise approach is designed to go beyond the services of the Georgetown Fire Department by involving homeowners in the effort to protect people, their property and our natural resources from wild fires or yard fires. A Firewise Community includes a resident effort to provide and maintain an environment around your home that is based on safer design and landscaping.



Up to one mile from your house can produce embers that may burn your property.

### What Firewise Do?

Firewise is a two part program. First, each resident can assist in fire risk on their own property even if living in a gated home. We don't want our own homes to contribute to the spread of a wildfire. Second, the Community Association staff leads efforts to manage the common or green space area maintenance. This includes the removal or pruning of vines and ash juniper or cedar. Other opportunities exist for residents to help the CA landscape with the removal of vine and ash juniper removal.

### How Can You Help?

When landscaping initially or replacing shrubbery, choose

## Examples of our materials including a monthly newsletter.



# Home Ignition Zone Material Firewise



## HOME IGNITION ZONE STRUCTURE ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Note: The assessment is designed to help determine "how vulnerable the structure" will be during the wildfire and to convey recommendations that should be taken so that the home will have a better chance to survive a wildfire. Remember, the following assessment items are for prevention/mitigation measures to be done well in advance of wildfire season.

Date of Assessment: \_\_\_\_\_ Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Resident Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Property Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Items	Mitigation Recommendations
<b>1. OVERVIEW OF SURROUNDINGS</b>	
How is the structure positioned in relationship to severe fire behavior?	
Type of Construction.	
<b>2. CHIMNEY TO EAVES</b>	
Inspect the roof – noncombustible? Shingles missing? Shingles flat with no gaps?	
Gutters – present? Noncombustible?	
Litter on roof, in gutters and crevices.	
<b>3. EAVES TO FOUNDATION</b>	
Attic, eaves, soffit vents and crawl spaces.	
Inspect windows and screens – metal screens? Multi-paned windows? Picture windows facing vegetation?	

<b>3. EAVES TO FOUNDATION (Continued)</b>	
Walls and attachments – noncombustible? Will they collect litter?	
Decks (combustible materials?)	
Fences.	
Flammable materials next to or under the structure.	
Crawl space, attic vents, soffits.	
Nooks and crannies and other small spaces.	
<b>4. FOUNDATION TO IMMEDIATE LANDSCAPED AREA</b>	
Landscaped (Managed) Vegetation – separation distances, maintenance, plant selection; Firewise Landscaping Zones?	
Propane Tanks.	
Vehicle and RV use and parking, including lawn mowers, etc.	
<b>5. IMMEDIATE LANDSCAPED AREA TO EXTENT OF THE HOME IGNITION ZONE</b>	
Inspect vegetation clearance and crown separation.	

**We have adapted this HIZ form.**

*Rite in the Rain*



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(953) 922-8000 • RiteintheRain.com

PS-441





# Different Situations



**Sun City has several different situations since the developer has changed and at least 6 sets of floor plans have been used. On the left is an early example with mature trees. On the right is a newer example with planted trees. Building materials have changed some but the houses are relatively fire-resistant.**



A CRASH COURSE IN  
**TEXAS WEATHER**

**Our  
comment  
on Texas  
weather!**



**THE FOUR SEASONS**





# Tailoring the Firewise® Concepts to Your Community

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