

# How to Put Together a Successful Mitigation Meeting

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**MILLS AND PRUDHOMME** offer the following useful tips for people who would like to organize a meeting in their community:

- ✓ When hosting or sponsoring a meeting, your presentation can be limited to distributing informational flyers or hand-outs, or as ambitious as asking others to “champion” the effort to reduce the wildfire risk.
- ✓ Consider holding the meeting when other major events won’t present a conflict, and as close to the last publicized fire as possible. Snow has an amazing ability to redirect people’s focus.
- ✓ Hold the meeting at a central location and at a convenient time. Locations can range from an individual’s home, driveway or cul-de-sac, to churches, schools, and fire station community rooms. Take a poll among those who would like to attend to figure out the best times. Use a facility that can provide or accommodate food and beverage.
- ✓ Send invitations or call every homeowners’ association in your wildland/urban interface with an offer to inform homeowners of methods to reduce their wildfire risk.
- ✓ Prior to the meeting, get an idea of who will be represented and prepare to give information that is relevant and useful. Discuss both short- and long-range goals.
  - Short-range project goals may include: cleaning needles and debris from gutters, mowing grasses away from the house, displaying an address sign, and pruning trees and shrubs away from home foundations.
  - Long-range goals may include: developing defensible space, re-roofing the home with noncombustible roofing material; and in some instances, developing community water supplies (usually cisterns or dry hydrants) and community fuel breaks (larger fuel treatment areas that protect multiple structures).
- ✓ Explain that efforts to make individual homes safer from wildfires make a great start, but for mitigation to be really effective, it requires a neighborhood endeavor. Briefly explain how wildfire mitigation is most effective when adjacent property owners put forth the same effort. Encourage other homeowners to host or sponsor a neighborhood or community meeting.
- ✓ Use of case studies often allows people to examine the fire problem from various perspectives. The firefighter’s viewpoint alone is usually insufficient. Always invite the local fire chief to present the realities of the department’s fire protection capabilities. Consider having additional speakers attend such as local and state forest service representatives, county emergency management personnel, and county or municipal planning representatives.
- ✓ Identify representatives from other departments and organizations who are the appropriate entity to address specific local problems. Individuals often want to deviate from fire and fire safety to discuss topics such as forest health and agency policy arenas. It’s a good idea to have knowledgeable people from related areas on hand to lend their expertise.
- ✓ Challenge attendees to hold neighborhood work days and share rental costs for dumpsters and chippers to remove unwanted trees, brush, and debris generated during clean-up activities. If you make people aware of how actions will directly benefit them, they will often be motivated to organize a group effort.
- ✓ Meetings should be linked to future plans and actions. Even if the initial meeting is only informational, it is always beneficial to have follow-up meetings scheduled. For additional gatherings, develop community-sponsored events such as slash pickup, pile burning (a controversial practice that has limited applicability), and community-based public awareness efforts to reduce costs to the individual homeowner.
- ✓ For those who would like additional support, the Colorado State Forest Service can help organize local Firewise workshops in Colorado. Outside of Colorado, please contact the national Firewise group by logging onto [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org). ■