

Mobile Firewise Educational Exhibit Educates Residents

The Challenge

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service responds to an average of 1,600 wildfires each year. Most of these wildfires occur where wild lands and human dwellings overlap. The Pine Barrens region of the State is also very susceptible to large and devastating wildfires. In light of these challenges, New Jersey has several important priorities— preventing wildfires and making the public more aware of how to make their properties less susceptible to wildfire.

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service teaches homeowners how to reduce fire risk by applying techniques developed by the National Fire Protection Association as part of its Firewise Communities Program. Homeowners learn how to make their properties “Firewise” by clearing brush and woody debris near their home, or increasing the spacing between plantings, among other practices.

Having homeowners apply Firewise concepts to their landscapes is critical in protecting homes from wildfires and limiting damage to homes impacted by a wildfire. Extensive staff time is needed for small individual outreach programs, and delivering programs at large outdoor fairs and events requires a marketing tool to attract viewers to a Firewise educational display.

The Solution

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service used Federal funding from a State Fire Assistance/Hazard Mitigation grant to help purchase and develop an attractive mobile Firewise and fire prevention trailer exhibit. This roving unit has two sides that each meets a separate educational need: one side is used to actively engage an audience, and the other side provides displays and educational videos. The Forest Fire Service obtained a vehicle through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program to pull the Firewise exhibition trailer. This companion vehicle was labeled to match the trailer’s messaging scheme.

Firewise and other fire prevention programs help prevent human-caused wildfires and educate the public about reducing fire risk to their homes and property.



This educational exhibit takes the Firewise message on the road. (Photo by the New Jersey Forest Fire Service)

Resulting Benefits

The educational trailer delivers Firewise and fire prevention messages to small and large audiences alike. It requires limited time to gather and set up displays. The unit is entirely self contained and has audio visual capabilities and a portable generator for power. This mobile unit can be used across a large regional area without the need to transfer equipment and supplies, which reduces the staff time needed to plan and prepare for educational events.

Sharing Success

The New Jersey Forest Fire Service has used the Firewise educational trailer at many events, including large regional fairs and expos. Children of all ages have played the carnival-style “Firewise Wheel” and received a Smokey Bear fire prevention item if they spun the wheel, answered a question, and learned something about becoming Firewise, preventing wildfires, or both. Today’s youth will be the homeowners of the future, so these educational efforts will pay off well into the future.



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