



Wildfire Safety Council

10 Points

New Action – May, 2017

Although there are no **official** prerequisites for this action, it is suggested that a municipality be actively engaged in the suite of Emergency Preparedness actions, (Firewise, Ready-Set-Go, and Community Wildfire Prevention Plans (CWPP)) before seeking to establish a Wildfire Safety Council.

The goal of establishing a local Wildfire Safety Council is to coordinate and build capacity for a municipality to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire to its residents. There are a multitude of technical and financial resources available to municipalities seeking to reduce the risk of wildfire, and a Wildfire Safety Council can coordinate and assist a municipality with those training and funding opportunities. Fire companies are staffed with volunteers, and many OEM personnel are either part time or hold other positions and do not have the time to pursue opportunities as they arise. A local Wildfire Safety Council, acting like any other municipal commission, (Shade Tree, Environmental, Historic Preservation etc.), can stay informed, meet on a regular basis and pursue training and funding opportunities. The council can act as the responsible party in applying for grants, (with municipal approval), coordinating municipal and fire company partnership efforts, and be a location where concerned residents can get information about their particular wildfire risk.

Why is it important?

Local Wildfire Safety Councils can serve many roles. A Wildfire Safety Council can act as a liaison between the local fire company, a municipality and its outreach efforts under Ready-Set-Go! Fire Company. The council can take on the responsibility of updating the municipality's **Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)** every five years. It can assist in coordinating a wide range of a municipality's wildfire activities, such as technical training for firefighters and residents on how to prepare and respond to wildfires; promoting **Firewise, Ready-Set-Go! Fire Company** and other free wildfire-related programs, and seeking grant funding opportunities. The volunteer council can act as the point of contact to assist neighborhood communities within the municipality to achieve the Firewise designation and provide information and awareness directly to the community.

A municipality engaged in wildfire emergency preparedness actions has access to technical and funding opportunities through the following programs:

- **Firewise Community** - technical resources as well as financial resources through grants.
- **Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)**- Financial resources are available through the NJ Forestry Services, Forest Fire Service to pay a consultant to prepare the CWPP in cooperation with the municipality's professionals.
- **Ready-Set-GO! Fire Company** - Technical resources and outreach materials are provided for local fire companies by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). Mentoring opportunities are available for interested fire companies.
- **Community Forestry Management Plan and NJUCF Accreditation** - Communities engaged with Community Forestry in NJ have access to Green Community funds to write municipal level Community Forestry Management Plans (CFMP). Once the plans are written and a municipality is approved by the NJ Forest Service they are eligible for cost sharing on wildfire related practices that were identified in the CFMP.

We encourage you to visit the associated Sustainable Jersey actions for specific action guidance.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

To create a strong Wildfire Safety Council the community should recruit members from:

- The municipal Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The OEM Coordinator and local Fire Chief (s) or their designee are **mandatory** members.
- Concerned residents with a vested interest in protecting their home from wildfire are a good start.
- Insurance industry representatives are vitally concerned that their clients have taken measures to protect their structures from wildfires and make excellent council members.
- Local volunteer firemen can provide advice and expertise on wildfire safety.
- Utility companies, including water, power and telephone companies, have a keen interest in protecting their infrastructure from wildfire.

Municipalities should also appoint an elected official to serve as a liaison (ex-officio or non-voting member) to the council. This will facilitate communication and coordination between the Wildfire Council partner and the town council and municipal departments.

Communities should seek technical assistance from the NJ Forest Fire Service and NJ Forest Service. These representatives can serve in ex-officio, non-voting member role(s) on the local council.

Timeframe

The drafting and adoption of a municipal ordinance to establish the Wildfire Safety Council must go through municipal council for approval. Wildfire Safety Council formation advocates should work with a municipal council member to develop a draft ordinance for discussion and legal review. (A [draft model ordinance](#) is provided in the resources section.) It may be useful to work with the council member who serves as the fire department liaison or to reach out to the municipal business administrator. The final ordinance will be formally introduced by council at a public meeting, with an opportunity provided for public comment. After the first reading, changes to the ordinance can be made based on feedback. The final ordinance can be approved and voted on after the second reading. This process typically takes 3-12 months, depending on the complexity of the ordinance and the administrative, legal and technical support provided by the municipality. The municipal council will then need to formally appoint the individual members to serve on the Wildfire Safety Council in accordance with the ordinance's guidance.

Project costs and resource needs

The services of the municipal attorney will be needed to help review the ordinance establishing Wildfire Safety Council. Municipalities are encouraged to tailor the ordinance to fit the particular needs of their community. After the ordinance is drafted and approved, appointments would need to be made by the governing body to fill the seats of the newly formed Wildfire Safety Council.

A [draft model ordinance](#)/resolution is provided in the resources section of this action. Communities can also find model ordinance examples on the NJ Fire Safety Council website at: <http://www.njfiresafetycouncil.org/grant-opportunities>

What to do, and how to do it ("How to")

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. A municipality does not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.

1. Using the [model ordinance](#) as a guide, a municipal attorney can work with key interested parties from the local fire department, Office of Emergency Management, and council leadership to draft an ordinance to form the Wildfire Safety Council. A is available for use in the Resources section of this action and also available on the [NJ Wildfire Safety Council website](#). To earn points under this action, the ordinance establishing the Wildfire Safety Council must include the appointment of a minimum of 5 members, including the fire chief from the municipal fire company or department that serves the municipality, and a representative from the municipal Office of Emergency Management. If the municipality is served by more than one fire department/company, the municipality is encouraged to appoint the fire chief or designee from each department/company servicing the community. Other recommended members include businesses or companies with an interest in wildfire, (insurance and utility companies) as well as interested residents. The ordinance must also identify a council liaison to Wildfire Safety Council. The model ordinance suggests the following types of appointment classes:

- Class A Member: Fire chief or designee. (*Multiple fire companies may require additional designees*).
- Class B Member: OEM Coordinator or Deputy.
- Class C Members: 3-5 interested members from the local community including, a local planner, construction code official, residents in fire prone areas, insurance company representatives, utility company representatives, land trusts, large landowners.
- Ex-Officio: Township committee/borough council members to serve as liaison(s) to the local governing board in an ex-officio, non-voting position.
- Ex-Officio: External advisors from the: NJ State Forestry Services- NJ Forest Fire Service, etc. as needed, also in ex-officio, non-voting position(s). It is strongly advised that municipalities establish a working partnership with the New Jersey Forest Fire Service for technical assistance and mutually beneficial communication.

The ordinance will spell out resources available to the council and establish the council liaison to the township committee/borough council.

2. Towns creating a Wildfire Safety Council are strongly encouraged to reach out to the NJ Wildfire Safety Council for assistance and guidance in crafting an ordinance and for assistance in starting the [Wildfire Safety Council](#).

3. Local government adopts Wildfire Safety Council ordinance.

4. The Mayor appoints the chairperson and members to the Wildfire Safety Council. For the Class C members, the town may want to inform residents that the council is being formed and invite volunteers to serve. Often, members of the community who have been instrumental in building support for the ordinance ultimately become members of the council, but the governing body should also look for a diversity of talent and experience for membership. In appointing the chair of the council, the mayor should seek a dynamic, organized leader who can help the council to establish its priorities for the coming year.

5. At the Wildfire Safety Council's initial meetings, members should discuss goals and prioritize actions for projects, education, and development review. Wildfire Safety Council members should strive to coordinate the resources, outreach activities and initiatives related to wildfire issues in the municipality.

6. The Wildfire Safety Council will then carry out goals and report on accomplishments.

7. Minutes must be kept of each Wildfire Safety Council meeting, and at the end of each year the council should submit an annual report to the municipal governing body. It is also a good idea to send the annual report to the local media in the form of a press release, and to post it on the council's webpage. A copy of the annual report will need to be submitted to Sustainable Jersey to earn certification points. The annual report should include a summary of activities undertaken by the Wildfire Safety Council, and a list of the meeting dates, along with a list of current members that identifies their membership class and term.

What to submit to earn points for this action

- A copy of the adopted Fire Safety Council ordinance or resolution.
- The number and a roster of members appointed to the council, which includes their membership class and term.
- Calendar of meeting dates.
- Annual Report, when applicable, to continue to receive points for this action.

In order to earn points for this action, the following documentation must be submitted as part of the online certification application in order to verify that the action requirements have been met.

Description of Implementation – In the text box provided on the submission page for this action provide a short narrative (300 words or less) of what has been accomplished and the impact it has or will have on the community.

Upload a copy of the adopted Wildfire Safety Council Ordinance that includes the date of adoption. If the adopted ordinance is available on the municipal codes website, a link to the adopted ordinance is acceptable.

Upload a copy of the annual report for the previous calendar year that includes a summary of activities undertaken by the Wildfire Safety Council. The report should also include a list of the meeting dates and a list of members that identifies their membership class and term. OR, if your Council is newly established, please provide the names of your appointed members, a list of Council goals and minutes from at least one meeting to document that your Wildfire Safety Council is active.

Resubmission Requirements

To resubmit for points under this action, please provide updated information for all requirements listed under the "What to submit to earn points for this action." If your ordinance establishing the Wildfire Safety Council is still valid, you do not need to re-upload this documentation.

Approved Action Expiration Date

Approved actions will be set to expire annually.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

There is a limit of six uploaded documents per action and individual files must not exceed 20 MB. Excerpts of relevant information from large documents are recommended.

All action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submissions should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

Spotlight: What NJ municipalities are doing

Barnegat Wildfire Safety Council

Description of the Barnegat Wildfire Safety Council formation process and membership. The statewide New Jersey Fire Safety Council was founded in July 2015, and Barnegat Township formed its own Wildfire Safety Council in May, 2016. Barnegat Township Committeeman, Frank Caputo, explained the Township's decision to form the council by saying, "We know that Barnegat Township, with part of the community west of the Garden State Parkway and in the Pinelands, can and will be affected by wildfires. We also know from experience you can never be too prepared. Barnegat Township has been through major wildfire incidents since the Warren Grove Fire in 2007. We have an obligation to our residents to do whatever we can to reduce their risk, and enabling this council is a good decision in that regard."

John Cowie, past president of the Barnegat Fire Company, was a principal proponent of creating the Wildfire Safety Council, and he was selected to represent the Fire Company on the council. Cowie explained, "Barnegat Township was the first municipality in New Jersey to complete the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) process back in 2010. We were also selected by the International Association of Fire Chiefs to be one of the few volunteer fire companies used in their demonstration project for the inaugural Ready, Set, Go! program. We have a lot to offer our community, as a result of the experience we gained with wildfire and how to prepare for it."

Nancy Reid from the Horizons at Barnegat development decided to get involved years ago by starting a Firewise Community at Horizons. Nancy was the "sparkplug" needed to get her community aware of the risk they all faced. Mrs. Reid said, "We started our efforts off slowly and we have continued those efforts of reducing the fuels around our development for the past eight years with help from the New Jersey Forest Fire Service's sponsored Firewise program."

<https://fireadaptednetwork.org/first-municipal-fire-safety-council-formed-barnegat-township/>

Barnegat Wildfire Safety Council's webpage on the Barnegat Township website.

<http://barnegat.net/wildfire-safety-council/>

NJ Fire Safety Council website. There is a copy of the model ordinance there as well.

<http://www.njfiresafetycouncil.org/>

Fire Safe Montana, a statewide Wildfire Safety Council initiated a program entitled; "Enough is Enough" a series of essays, letters to the editor and public service announcements designed to raise wildfire awareness for those people living in and around the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), or the areas where development meets the forest.

<http://firesafemt.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Living-with-Fire-Tom-Zimmerman-Release-Format.pdf>

California Wildfire Safety Council produced a series of informational brochures to assist homeowners in preparing for a wildfire in their community.

Fire Safe Brochures

- Reducing Wildfire Risk
- Get Ready for Fire Season
- Ready-Set-Evacuate

http://www.cafiresafecouncil.org/index2.php?page_id=53

Resources

The following resources may be helpful in completing this action.

NJ Resources

Draft Model Ordinance for Establishing a Wildfire Safety Council

http://sustainablejersey.com/fileadmin/media/Actions_and_Certification/Actions/Wildfire_Safety_Council/Wildfire_Safety_Council_model_ordinance_5-15-17_FINAL.pdf

NJ Fire Safety Council provides information on forming a Wildfire Safety Council, grants, model ordinance language and planning and technical resources.

<http://www.njfiresafetycouncil.org/grant-opportunities>

NJ Forest Fire Service provides technical assistance and grant funding to towns to address wildfire planning and management.

www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/fire/aboutus.html

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Other Resources

Fire Safe Montana includes ideas for Wildfire Safety Council Projects.

<http://firesafemt.org/category/library-center/media-announcements-and-flyer-templates/>