



**READY, SET,
GO!**

*Draft Business Plan
v3.4
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Vision

“Create Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) situated in high fire hazard environments that are designed, constructed, retrofitted, managed, and maintained in a manner to require little fire suppression assistance during wildfires. Residents of these communities will take personal responsibility for living in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and the Home Ignition Zone, possess the knowledge and skills to effectively prepare their home for survival from wildfire, evacuate early and safely when ordered, and if trapped, practice learned skills to survive the wildfire.”

Overview

The Ready, Set, Go program is a new approach at packaging existing public education programs to gain active public involvement toward reducing life/property loss and escalating costs associated with wildland fires.

The Ready, Set, Go program is a collaborative process that can be effective in improving coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community. Developing the Ready, Set, Go program in each community can help build partnerships, clarify and refine priorities to protect life, property, infrastructure, and valued resources.

“Ready, Set, Go!” (RSG) is a public education program with two core focus points:

1. Stress and teach personal responsibility to those people who elect to live within the WUI into the wildland fire solution by educating people in wildfire preparation, prevention, evacuation and what to do if trapped.
2. Begin to contain WUI fire suppression costs and reduce injuries by making communities less vulnerable to wildland fires through prevention and preparation, construction and retrofitting, defensible space and fire-resistant landscaping, and WUI fuel modification as a result of informed construction and development planning.

As a major public paradigm shift designed to enlist personal responsibility, this is a public education program that must have long-term support to be successful. RSG is not in competition with other programs (i.e. FIREWISE, Living with Fire, Take Responsibility, etc), but rather a complimentary program designed to achieve the goal of Fire-Adapted Communities.

The core RSG concept is broken into three sections:

- **READY** – Teaches the public to prepare well in advance of a wildland fire. It tells them how to retrofit their homes and take preventive actions to mitigate the effects of ember intrusion in the home ignition zone using Firewise and similar principles.
- **SET** – Teaches the public to elevate your family’s situational awareness when fire weather occurs or when wildfires are burning, and to monitor your environment and be ready to implement your family disaster plan.
- **GO** – This is the simplest step. It encourages the public to implement their family disaster plan by *leaving early*, well before the fire arrives.

A subsequent step is included to educate people how to survive, if trapped by a wildfire.

Background

The Ready, Set, Go program is organized in six sections:

1. Background / Problem Statement
2. Program Goals
3. Factors for Success
4. Preparation of Structures and People
5. Human Understanding and Decision Making
6. Contingency Planning

1. Background / Problem Statement

The problem is the fire service across the nation has seen a dramatic increase in the number of wildland fires, acreage burnt, structures damaged, firefighter injuries and fire suppression costs over the past decade. Weather projections indicate this trend is not changing soon and research is showing that climate change is a major contributing factor. Weather combined with the ever growing fuels management issues; indicate that wildland fires will be part of our future.

The problem is that fires can be more costly to everyone in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and taxpayers who support fire suppression costs. This is due to the escalating amount of fire suppression resources needed to combat these fires and higher fire losses due to abundant fuels, aging non-code compliant homes, climatic changes and the influx of population into these scenic wildland areas.

The problem is increased by the number of homes at risk from wildfire due to residential development encroachment on forest and wildland areas. Additionally, homes outside of the traditional WUI are increasingly being destroyed by ember intrusions/ignitions and urban conflagrations.

The problem is that there's a general belief that public safety providers can meet the growing public service expectations. But the reality is the public is not taking an active role to protect their own property, and fire service revenues cannot make the expectation of higher service levels a reality.

The problem becomes how to get the public education message listened to and turned into action by the public. Historically, the fire service has conducted public education efforts to try to get the public's support in reducing fire losses. This effort began with the Smokey Bear advertising campaign to prevent wildfires. Now the focus is on getting communities to become fire-ready. There are several national and local programs (Firewise, Living with Fire, Take Responsibility) that teach these tenets to create Fire Adapted Communities.

The fire problem within the WUI areas consists of two primary fuel types: (1) accumulation of natural and exotic vegetation and (2) the structures and ornamental landscaping that people create. Natural vegetation reduction or management is a long-term process that is becoming more difficult due to climate change and environmental conditions. This effort must continue to help restore our ecosystem and reduce fire size. While defensible space measures are proven, residents must also retrofit their homes to modern building codes and modify their ornamental landscape so its fire safe. These actions on structural fuels are usually more permanent in nature than the recurring efforts required on natural fuels.

The problem is that residents are doing little to no pre-fire activities before a wildfire occurs that improves the *survivability of people and their homes*. Waiting until smoke is in the air is too late, prevention and preparation are key actions.

The problem is people tend to have the expectation that, when they call 911, they will get a response to fit their needs. With an increase in population that has not had a corresponding public safety service revenue increase; fire managers may not be able to realistically meet those public expectations. The public must take personal responsibility for the specific hazards associated within their choice of habitation. Government must also fund public services commensurate with growth.

The problem is there a growing number of residents that defy evacuation orders. Some of these residents are successful in staying and defending their property, but have limited training or experience and have based their actions on past wildfire experiences. People stay within hazardous areas due to a lack of situational / safety awareness, proprietary concerns, trust and poor evacuation routes/practices. The tragic results of this problem were seen during “Black Saturday,” February 7, 2009, in Australia.

The problem is that no two wildfires behave in the same manner and, during the past decade, these wildfires are acting more erratically and the deaths and property losses are escalating. The residents who choose to stay or get trapped also cause a safety issue for public safety officials who, with already limited resources, must now try to effect rescues during these wildfires.

The problem is that there needs to be adequate evacuation resources, uniform and consistent evacuation terminology (refer to FIRESCOPE 2007 Field Operation Guide 420-1), model practices, notification ability and re-entry procedures so residents can re-enter as early and safely as possible.

2. Program Goals

- A. Improve firefighter and public safety.
- B. Protect life and property by creating and maintaining Fire Adapted Communities.
- D. Encourage personal responsibility toward the overall solution.
- D. Improve evacuation procedures.
- E. Acceptance of the strategy to: Prepare your property and yourself, leave early, follow evacuation orders and survive.

3. Factors for Success

Fire agencies have been providing public education messages for many years, so one might ask; “Why is Ready, Set, Go different from past efforts?” The following factors will be instrumental in gaining program effectiveness:

Collaboration between the public, government and neighbors. In 1997, FEMA established Project Impact to help communities reduce their disaster tolls by building partnerships among businesses, agencies, churches, neighborhoods and others. This effort showed that amazing things can happen when working in close partnerships with one another by making long-term changes in their disaster profiles. Project Impact identified common issues that communities face when dealing with tornados and hurricanes with the thought that, if they modify key factors that contribute to safety/damage, then the community would be better off when the next

disaster occurs. Project Impact sought to change that culture to make hazard mitigation an integral part of the community and the people's lives.

Use of science – Home Ignition Zone research. Traditional beliefs that homes were ignited by the flaming fire front are being disproved by scientific research studies. Jack Cohen (USFS Researcher) has done several field tests to determine how homes can be ignited and the results indicate that ember intrusion is the primary cause of home ignitions. After action reviews have now created code revisions that can mitigate ember intrusions.

Target audience identification. Each fire agency must recognize their target audience to whom they intend to reach out to. This includes understanding the social, economic and demographic nature of these communities. Example, a rural community (intermix) may be more self sufficient than an urban home subdivision (interface) and the communication message needs to fit the character of the community so the target audience can readily relate. This applies to printed materials and visual graphics on videos. Fire agencies should also review the national public survey on how the public receives our current messages (PIFE study, 2008).

Recognition that government cannot be the answer all the time. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training began as an offshoot of earthquake preparedness training. During a major earthquake, studies found that the limited emergency resources would be prioritized to critical infrastructure targets. This recognition of priorities also found that the CERT program would focus on neighbor helping neighbor and that the population needs to accept personal responsibility for their own preparedness and actions. It meant that residents had to accept the premise of: If you choose to live in a hazard area, then you must become more self-sufficient.

Recognizing Long-Lasting Change Takes Time. The emotions following a disaster are usually short-lived, recognizing this time frame is paramount in creating and implementing educational programs to take advantage of this opportunity. Educational change must occur and change management requires opportunities, perseverance and focus on the goal. One must be committed to the change being implemented, not be deterred easily and recognize that true change occurs over time, not immediately.

Setting Priorities. Stakeholders (public, fire agencies, law enforcement, media, disaster relief organizations, utility companies and local government) may have a limited budget and time commitment toward achieving the entire program tenets. Therefore, through local discussions, these stakeholders should reach consensus on their specific program priorities that will benefit their community. A phased-in program is better than no program at all.

Leave Early and Early Return. The public generally trusts public safety officials because of their training, experience and authority. The public should obey evacuation orders and leave early, but be ready for an early return if possible. Public safety officials will need to have re-entry plans developed as evacuation orders are issued, but they must assure the public's safety before re-entry is directed.

Understanding that no programs can be universally applied and that clear, understandable messages are paramount. Public officials must issue direction based upon the general population. Specific direction and modifications can occur, but only when there are clear communications with the affected populace, usually in small groups with effective two-way communications.

Creating Public Education Tools to Reach the Masses. There needs to be a variety of media tools designed upon the population's understanding of the problem and not the fire services perception. We must understand the needs of our urban, suburban and rural communities and develop a variety of tools and methods to reach into each residence. It's usually not the strategy or principles that fail; it's the buy-in and action of the targeted stakeholders.

Focus on our Saves and not the Losses. After every emergency incident, the media carries the story of how many lives and property were lost because these are tangible numbers. What's harder to quantify are the number of homes and lives saved. Public officials need to identify these numbers and communicate this message better.

4. Preparation of Structures and People

In the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) Mega Fire Report (2008) following the Witch fire in San Diego, California, they reported the key to protecting lives and reducing property losses begins with hardening structures. Hardening structures focuses on new construction and/or retrofitting existing structures to modern building codes that recognize the wildland fire threat and the installation of home fire sprinklers. Studies have shown that most structures within the wildland are not destroyed from direct flame impingement, but rather from the ember environment. Embers may precede the flaming fire front, carried by the winds and distributing burning brands or embers over long distances. These embers fall, or are wind driven

into receptive fuels at structures, often going undetected for some time. As the fire front passes, these small embers may ignite incipient fires that spread to the home and then from home to home in a neighborhood. Key retrofits include fire-safe roofs and vent rescreening to 1/8 inch mesh or approved vents.

In new developments, updated fire and building codes are addressing proper home locations and construction types. Older, existing residences need to make retrofits to improve the structure's survivability. These actions need to include defensible space areas, water supply, access, identification and ornamental landscaping. There are also maintenance issues involved in living within the WUI. Residents should reduce the ability of embers to start small fires by cleaning leaves, pine needles, twigs and branches off roofs and rain gutters. They should also remove combustibles near the structure like firewood stacked by the house, patio furniture, attached wood fences and ornamental landscaping.

People need to mentally prepare themselves to handle the stress of a wildfire. They need to create situational awareness of wildfires by understanding what the fire environment is like. Then they need to create their own Wildfire Action Plan with a checklist to enhance their preparedness status.

5. Human Understanding and Reaction

Researchers indicate that it takes a significant amount of mental preparation by homeowners to not panic and flee when flames are licking at their doors. "The noise alone of a wildfire front is phenomenal. Then the sun goes away, and the sky goes dark in the middle of the day. It's haunting and the people need to understand that before they ever think about staying."

(<http://news.ucanr.org/newsstorymain.cfm?story=1180>)

Ready, Set, Go is a program that tries to provide real-life wildfire situational awareness for the public. Fire agencies will instruct what it's like before, during and after a firestorm from a firefighter's perspective. The public will learn that even experienced firefighters never treat one fire like the next as fire, fuel and weather conditions constantly change, making every fire different. Hopefully, the public will learn from the firefighter's experience and when a trusted public safety official issues evacuation orders, the public will leave early so they don't become trapped.

Studies have shown that people who are taught about certain tactics and train on exercising those tactics have a higher level of repeating those skills as a reaction, not decision making during adverse conditions, based upon training and experience. The fire service cannot readily expect that the public with only limited training will act and make decisions as trained firefighters do during a firestorm condition. The “fight or flight” syndrome occurs during these times and may manifest itself as panic or irrational behavior. This is why this program focuses on the reaction to: LEAVE EARLY!

6. Contingency Planning (how to survive, if trapped)

Everyone who lives within a WUI area should have a contingency plan developed before a fire starts in case they can't, or are prevented, from evacuating. Fire service officials do not endorse anyone defying an evacuation order, but they realize some people may get trapped and should have basic survival skills. These skills are based upon public education information that provides the resident with some situational awareness, proper actions to take before, during and after a fire.

Some residents have experienced a wildfire and may have the expectation that one fire behaves like another. This false assumption can lead to complacency and reduce preparedness. Just as experienced firefighters know that every fire behaves differently, residents must be educated on fire behavior to understand its complexity and danger.

Target Audience

To accomplish the RSG vision, fire officials must identify target groups that are instrumental to achieve success and create a team framework:

- Firefighters – This group will make or break the RSG program. Firefighters are trusted by their communities and are the best ambassadors to sell RSG. To accomplish this, firefighters must see the benefits of the program and endorse its principles.
- Law Enforcement – This group is responsible to enact evacuations and perform re-entry procedures pending fire official's directions.
- Policy Makers – This group must buy-in and support the RSG tenets, including policy changes.
- Public – The public is the key group to understand the intent of the program and then become an active participant.
- Media – The media needs to support the RSG message via on-going media coverage.

Stakeholders

The key stakeholders that must be included to make RSG successful include:

- Public
- Local Fire Agencies
- State Foresters
- Federal Fire Agencies
- Fire Labor Groups
- Law Enforcement
- Non-Profit Organizations
- National Code Associations
- States, Counties, Cities
- Media
- Government Policy Officials
- American Red Cross
- Emergency Management Officials
- Insurance Industry
- Construction Industry

Marketing / Implementation Plan

The attached “**Tools for Implementation**” document (**Appendix A**) is intended to assist those fire agencies wishing to use the RSG public education program. The basic RSG program is simple, self explanatory and the IAFC intends to offer generic printed materials and video/PSA messages that an entity can customize to meet the respective community culture. It is important to note that RSG is a national format, but that each entity must recognize how best to present the RSG message within their community for it to be well received. Based upon national feedback, the IAFC may create specific regional education information to better serve the needs of a diverse national format.

As part of the national implementation plan, the IAFC may sponsor “mentors” to visit and assist entities requesting assistance in the RSG implementation upon request. Discussions are also underway for the development of a “train-the-trainer” RSG curriculum.

Program Management

RSG is a long-term national concept developed and managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) with support from the RSG stakeholders. The IAFC continues to build a national RSG consensus among its stakeholders to achieve success. This is an evolving program that will be modified to fit the needs of its target audience and stakeholders over time. The IAFC will act as the national custodian of this program for updates and information dissemination. RSG inquiries to the IAFC may be made to the:

International Association of Fire Chiefs
Ready, Set, Go Program Administrator
4025 Fair Ridge Drive
Fairfax, VA 22033
703-273-0911
<http://www.iafc.org/>

The IAFC will assume an active role in the dissemination of the program across the country, paying particular attention to ensuring that all fire agencies – large and small, career or volunteer – are supported with the training and materials necessary to adopt RSG in their jurisdiction.

Development Plan

<u>Milestones</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
Concept Review	Aug. 2008
RSG Design	March 2009
RSG Consensus	Feb. 2010
Pilot Roll Out	March 2010
Evaluation	Dec. 2010
National Roll Out	March 2011
Evaluation	March 2012

The RSG concept process began with the evaluation of the Australian “Stay & Defend or Leave Early” model in August 2008. It was redesigned following “Black Saturday” into the RSG program in March 2009. The current RSG program has been alpha-tested in two geographic areas with success. The final RSG consensus process is scheduled to occur in February 2010.

At the January, 2010 National Association of State Foresters (NASF) meeting in Orlando, FL, there was a solicitation for nine additional geographical diverse communities to conduct beta pilot RSG programs. The alpha and beta pilots will be highlighted at the IAFC WUI conference in Reno, March 2010. During this conference, generic RSG program materials will be available to attendees so any entity can become a new pilot to field test RSG on a national level. During 2010, the NASF sponsored entities piloting RSG may contact the IAFC for mentors and materials as needed.

In December 2010, the IAFC and NASF will provide the beta pilot evaluations of the nine communities and will analyze for lessons learned. The IAFC will then make modifications and be ready to implement the national RSG roll-out at its 2011 Reno conference. An RSG website will also be created and maintained by the IAFC for marketing purposes and educational purposes.

The IAFC will work to develop a national marketing plan for the future. The IAFC will evaluate the need to create regional printed materials, video and PSAs for better community buy-in. From 2013 and on, the RSG program will require a continuous source of funding for marketing, video reproductions and printed materials. The IAFC is seeking funding so any entity can access standard RSG materials at no cost. Standard RSG materials will be available for custom modifications by individual agencies at their own cost.

Financial Analysis

RSG is currently funded through a cooperative agreement with the USDA Forest Service and the Department of Interior. RSG will require a long-term funding strategy and commitment from stakeholders for success. Ancillary funding for local implementation may be available via stakeholder partnerships at the local level.

How to Measure Success

Short-term:

- Public participation and engagement at community meetings
- Retrofitting of structures as measured by building permits, inspections, etc.
- Better evacuation order compliance
- Comparative analysis of property saved during wildfires
- Periodic public awareness surveys to assess program acceptance

Long-Term:

- Lower structure losses
- Reduced amount of fire suppression resources for structure protection
- Lowered fire suppression costs
- Less life loss and firefighter injuries
- Increased number of fire agencies adopting RSG
- Integration with existing Fire Adapted Community programs (I.e. Firewise, Living with Fire, Take Responsibility, etc.)

Risks

- Lack of widespread, long-term support and continuity
- Creating a message that doesn't resonate with at-risk communities
- Further or increased resistance to evacuation orders
- Insufficient financing and lack of support from the fire service and other stakeholders that could slow and/or fragment implementation

Conclusion

Fires in the Wildland Urban Interface and Home Ignition Zone will continue to take lives and cause property loss until changes can be made to the infrastructure, construction practices and emergency preparedness of the WUI residents. Ready, Set, Go is the first step towards creating Fire Adapted Communities that are prepared to cope with a wildfire disaster.

Links and Resources

General Resources

- California Fire Alliance—CWPP Resources: <http://cafirealliance.org/cwpp>
- Firewise website: <http://firewise.org>
- Key Public Opinion Research Findings on the Ecological Role of Fire and the Benefits of Fire Management, Partners in Fire Education (PIFE) study, 2008
- The Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/field-guide/web/page15.php>
- International Association of Fire Chief's Leader's Guide for Developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: http://www.iafc.org/associations/4685/files/CWPP_rev062005.pdf
- National Database of State and Local Wildfire Mitigation Programs, a source for information on ordinances: <http://ww.wildfireprograms.usda.gov>
- Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide (2006), Intertribal Timber Council: http://www.itcnet.org/issues_projects/issues/forest_management/reports.html
- Nevada's "Living with Fire" program
- BLM Partnership Web Site: <http://www.blm.gov/partnerships/tools.htm>
- Western Collaborative Assistance Network: <http://westcanhelp.org/>
- Forest Service Partnership Resource Center:
<http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/index.shtml>
- FIRESCOPE 2007 Field Operations Guide ICS 420-1, Chapter 20 "Protection Action Guidelines)
- Project Impact 1997, FEMA
- Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (Collaboration issue paper): <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/rvcc-issue-papers>
- Strategies for assisting low-income and underserved communities develop and implement CWPPs: <http://ri.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/communityfireplanning.html>

Reducing Structural Ignitability

- Australian Safe in Place information:
http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/dsp_content.cfm?CAT_ID=202 and
http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/dsp_content.cfm?cat_id=515
- California Ignition-Resistant Building and Fire Codes:
http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fire_prevention_wildland_codes.php
- Firewise Guide to Landscape and Construction, booklet:
<https://www.cmsassociates.com/firewise.nsf/avcatalog?open>
- Wildfire! Preventing Home Ignitions DVD, explains the research of Jack Cohen, USDA Forest Service, on how homes ignite and how to minimize potential for ignition: <https://www.cmsassociates.com/firewise.nsf/avcatalog?open>

Reducing Structural Ignitability: Articles and Publications

- Cohen, Jack. Structural Vulnerability and the Home Ignition Zone: The key to preventing residential fire disasters during extreme wildfire, letter from Jack Cohen to Douglas McDonald, Feb. 4, 2008
- Cohen J. 2001. Wildland–urban fire—a different approach. In: Proceedings of the Firefighter Safety Summit, Nov. 6–8, 2001, Missoula, MT. Fairfax, VA: International Association of Wildland Fire & other articles by Jack Cohen: http://www.nps.gov/fire/public/pub_publications.cfm.
- Institute for Business & Home Safety, (IBHS) 2008 Mega Fires – Witch Fire Study
- ICC, International Wildland-Urban Interface Code 2006, International Code Council, Country Club Hills, IL, 2006
- NFPA 1141, Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas, 2008 edition, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, 2007
- NFPA 1144, Standard for Reducing Structural Ignitions from Wildland Fire, 2008 edition, National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, 2007

Fuels Reduction and Restoration Resources

- The National Association of State Foresters Field Guidance for Identifying and Prioritizing Communities at Risk: <http://www.stateforesters.org/reports/COMMUNITIESATRISKFG.pdf>
- Management Tools for CWPP Implementation: Stewardship Contracting and Biomass Utilization <http://ri.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/communityfireplanning.html>
- Woody Biomass Utilization Desk Guide: http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/Woody_Biomass/documents/biomass_deskguide.pdf
- USDA Forest Service Stewardship Contracting Resource page: <http://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/projects/stewardship/index.shtml>

Monitoring and Evaluation Resources

- Community Wildfire Protection Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Guide: <http://ri.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/communityfireplanning.html>
- Public Response to Wildfire: Is the Australian “Stay and Defend or Leave Early” Approach an Option for Wildfire Management in the United States?, 2008, Sarah M. McCaffrey and Alan Rhodes
- Multiparty Monitoring Resources:
 - ° Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition—Multiparty Monitoring Issue Paper: <http://ri.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/communityfireplanning.html>
 - ° USDA Forest Service Collaborative Restoration Program—Multiparty Monitoring Guidelines: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/cfrp/monitoring/index.shtml>
 - ° Red Lodge Clearinghouse: http://www.redlodgeclearinghouse.org/resources/handbook_full.htm

Appendix A

Ready, Set, Go!

Wildfire Preparation Program

Tools for Implementation

Introduction

The Ready, Set, Go (RSG) wildfire preparation program is a comprehensive set of tools designed to give homeowners the information they need to:

- Help protect their homes (also using Firewise or similar principles)
- Prepare for a wildfire disaster
- Evacuate early and safely.

This program can be used as an important component in the establishment of a fire-adapted community.

The program is based on the thesis that, during a major wildfire, especially during the early stages, there may not be enough firefighting resources to protect every home. Ready, Set, Go encourages residents to take *personal responsibility* for preparing their property and family and, by doing so, become a part of the solution to the problem of increasing fire losses during wildfires.

Research shows that structures destroyed during wildfires are the result of embers in the ignition zone, rather than direct flame impingement. The Ready, Set, Go program places special emphasis on the ember environment (home ignition zone), instructing homeowners on concepts such as defensible space, fire-safe construction and fire-resistant landscaping. At the same time, it teaches residents what to do when threatened by a wildfire.

Preparation includes actions that can be taken both inside and outside of the home in advance of a wildfire. This is the “**Ready**” portion of the program. The “**Set**” part deals with emergency preparedness – emergency supplies, evacuation routes, what belongings to take when evacuating, and checklists for evacuation. It stresses situational awareness and evacuation readiness. The final segment of the program is “**Go**” Simply put, “Go” teaches residents that, after preparing their family and property, the safest thing they can do is to leave, and leave early, well before the fire arrives.

The ultimate goal of Ready, Set, Go is to help communities withstand a wildfire by creating “Fire Adapted Communities.” It develops a population that understands the threat posed by wildfires and that takes the personal actions necessary to help minimize the risk. And finally, Ready, Set Go teaches residents to understand that an early evacuation not only helps to ensure the safety of their families, but also gives firefighters the room they need to protect the community without having to worry about the personal safety of the residents.

Implementing the Program

Ready, Set, Go is most effective when it is personally taught, especially by firefighters to community residents, but the material is also designed so it can be mailed, posted online or distributed by other means and still be effective. It is also formatted in such a way that it can be customized by individual jurisdictions who wish to add their own logo or adapt the material to meet specific needs. But the program also allows agencies or jurisdictions with limited resources to utilize all of the material without having to make any changes.

A multi-faceted approach reaches a wider audience and repeated exposure to the messages helps ensure compliance. Presentation options include:

- Community meetings
- Presentations at service organizations and schools
- Mailing video DVD to residents
- Editorials and printed articles
- Door-to-door visits
- Radio and television spots
- Public service announcements
- Booth at county fair

Entities adopting this program should “think outside the box” for new presentation messages to resonate within their community’s culture. Non-traditional presentations could include showing RSG as a movie theatre leader or at a jury service waiting area.

The IAFC will make a variety of materials available to promote the program and jurisdictions may choose to use all, or only some of them, depending on the resources they are able to devote to implementing the program in their area. Ready, Set, Go materials are intended to reach the residential target audience and includes:

- Brochure – Wildfire Action Plan. This 12-page brochure outlines the Ready, Set, Go program, defines its key messages and contains checklists and tips for preparation, readiness and evacuation. This brochure may be reduced in size depending upon the audience and presentation needs.
- Video – Orientation. This video contains interviews with firefighters and private citizens discussing the unpredictable nature of wildfires and the need to be prepared for an evacuation.
- Video – Preparation. This is a “how-to” video that demonstrates to homeowners how to prepare their home, assemble emergency supplies, plan evacuation routes and how to survive if they are trapped by a wildfire.
- Video – Public Service Announcement. This short, one-minute video is designed to attract attention to the program and encourage the public to ask for more information. The PSA can be given to local television broadcast or local access stations and can be distributed to radio stations for use of the voice-over.
- Banners – two-foot by six-foot banners with grommets. These can be hung from fire engines or posted in front of meeting rooms to promote the program.
- Litter Bags – Although designed as litter bags for cars, they are perfect for filling with literature. Full bags can then be handed out at meeting or hung from doorknobs in neighborhoods.
- Posters – The posters can be used to promote meetings or increase awareness.

Because the program emphasizes personal responsibility, the best way to deliver the Ready, Set, Go message is personally, either face-to-face with a homeowner or in a venue like a community meeting. This type of interaction is especially effective, particularly when the message is delivered by a uniformed firefighter. The firefighter is naturally afforded a degree of authority, trust and expertise that helps make the public much more receptive to the message and more likely to act on it.

Sample Implementation Plan – No. 1

The best approach to implementing a new program is to make use of all the available resources to reach the largest number of people. It is critical to remember that, to be successful, Ready, Set, Go must be treated as an ongoing program, not a one-time presentation. Every opportunity should be taken to present the program to as many groups, organizations and agencies as possible. This plan includes the entire Ready, Set, Go materials.

- Step 1 – Air the Public Service Announcement as widely as possible to begin publicizing the program. Post it on the city, county or agency Web site.
- Step 2 – Schedule community meetings. Groups of about 25 or fewer are most effective because they allow for better personal interaction. Consider alternatives in addition to community meetings. These could include presentations at service clubs such as Rotary, Optimist or Kiwanis clubs, church groups, mobile home parks, homeowner’s associations, etc.
- Step 3 – Issue news releases and talk to the media directly about the issues and the RSG program. Hang posters publicizing the meeting and, on the day of the meeting, hang banners outside. Whenever possible, encourage local engine companies to attend.
- Step 4 – At the meetings, present the wildfire action plan and show either the orientation or preparation video. Audiences who are being exposed to the concept of wildfire preparedness for the first time would probably benefit the most from the orientation video. The preparation video could be used at subsequent events. Allow about 45 minutes for the presentation itself with another 15 minutes for questions. If there are time constraints, show the presentation video as a way to give the most information in the shortest amount of time and send a copy of the wildfire action plan home with everyone in the audience. In situations where it may not be possible to use a video, use the wildfire action plan for the presentation and have the audience follow along. Encourage them to make notes.
- Step 5 – Use the meeting(s) as an opportunity to promote fire-adapted communities, residential safety surveys and defensible space (weed abatement). Encourage residents to have their local firefighters walk their property with them and help them with the survey.
- Step 6 – Look for other opportunities to present the message to the public. Consider holding a wildfire safety expo with fire engines, vendors, etc. Staff a booth at the county fair or other public events. Make personnel available for local talk shows or radio programs. Consider movie ads in theatres.
- Step 7 – Make every effort to involve law enforcement, local government officials and the local media in presentations. Their support is critical, particularly with regards to evacuations.
- Explore partnerships with Firewise Communities, Fire Safe Councils, local insurance brokers, realtors, government entities, public landowners and service clubs.

Sample Implementation Plan – No. 2

Smaller agencies or volunteer departments may not have enough available personnel for a multi-level marketing approach to Ready, Set, Go implementation, but it can still be successfully introduced by concentrating resources and maximizing exposures. If personnel or budgetary considerations limit an agencies ability to broadly market the program, consider holding just one or two meetings, but turn them into events.

- Step 1 – If possible, air the Public Service Announcement as widely as possible to begin publicizing the program. Post it on the city, county or agency Web sites.
- Step 2 – Issue press releases and hang posters publicizing the Ready, Set, Go event. Work closely with local newspapers and media outlets. Hang banners from fire stations and other public building announcing the event.
- Step 3 – Include other organizations to make the event “value added” for the residents. Consider working with local law enforcement (evacuation enforcement), Red Cross (emergency supplies) and vendors (first aid kits, fire-resistant landscaping, attic vent coverings, weed abatement, home protection, etc.). This can be an opportunity to promote the wider concept of a fire-adapted community as well. Schedule fire department demonstrations to increase interest – firefighting gel, hose line extensions, chain saws, etc.
- Step 4 – Establish a time and place at the event to present Ready, Set, Go Show the video(s) if possible and have plenty of hand-out material available. Make the presentation the focal point of the event. Encourage local merchants to donate door prizes and local leaders to express their support. Identify spokespersons who can explain the program to the media. Create a mechanism to follow-up with residents wanting more information or a residential survey.
- Step 5 – Keep the message in front of the public as much as possible following the event. Mention it whenever possible during media interviews, city council presentations, etc.
- Step 6 – Begin planning for the next event, regardless of whether it is monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc.

The one-time nature of this sort of event makes it imperative to stress that the program and threat is ongoing. One event will not change preparedness behavior, nor will it create a fire-adapted community. The effort must be ongoing even if the event isn't.

Sample Implementation Plan – No. 3

It is possible that some agencies, perhaps some with significant risk from wildfire, will simply not have any resources to dedicate to this kind of a program. The Ready, Set, Go material is capable of working, at least to some degree, as a stand-alone campaign.

All of the material is designed to give residents the information they need in a readily accessible form. Each component can be used in its generic form with no changes necessary, meaning that a local agency only has to find a way to distribute the material. Some possible forms of distribution are:

- Web Site – Post the material as downloadable files on the city, county or agency Web site.
- Direct Mail – Establish a mailing list from a weed abatement program, tax roll or other list and mail the information.
- Other Mail – Include the Wildfire Action Plan (or other material) in a utility bill or other government mailing.
- Canvass – Hand out material door-to-door during a neighborhood canvass.
- Information Booth – Staff a booth at the local fair, farmer’s market or other public event.
- Local Sponsorships – Local insurance companies or other businesses may be able to assist by sponsoring the program. Some may even want to become more heavily involved and help defray expenses if they are allowed to put their logo on hand-out material.
- Local Media – Appeal to the local media to help deliver the message as a public service.

Marketing Tips

- Identify the common media markets and create a common media message using stock templates (attached)
- Social engineer your message so residents can relate to the awareness, attitude and behavior being taught
- Explain, engage, sell RSG versus the traditional enforce, tell, avoid interaction change process
- Utilize creative media presentations

Other Considerations

It cannot be stressed enough that Ready, Set, Go will only be successful if it becomes a model for behavior change. To accomplish this, agencies must commit to an ongoing effort of both time and resources. This may involve gaining consensus and/or support from other local government agencies, but the program's benefits are significant and those benefits should be cited whenever possible to encourage both support and funding. Some of the benefits are:

- The adoption of Ready, Set, Go serves as an excellent foundation for the establishment of fire-adapted communities.
- Ready, Set, Go is a simple, intuitive program that can be delivered through personally interaction or passively and still be understood at a meaningful level.
- The Ready, Set, Go materials allow the program to be easily presented one-on-one or to large groups.
- Much of the material is familiar to firefighters, making it very easy for them to learn the program. What makes Ready, Set, Go different is that the fire service is asking residents to take personal responsibility for their own safety.
- With a wide array of materials available to fire departments of all sizes, the program is simple and inexpensive to implement.
- As more and more departments adopt the program, the Ready, Set, Go message will gain wider acceptance through viral marketing and multiple exposures.
- RSG can be expanded/adapted to other types of emergency incidents, i.e. floods.
- RSG attracts community partners.

Conclusion

Fires in the Wildland Urban Interface and Home Ignition Zone will continue to take lives and cause property loss until changes can be made to the infrastructure, construction practices and emergency preparedness of the residents in those areas. Ready, Set, Go is the first step towards creating fire-adapted communities that are prepared to cope with a wildfire disaster.

READY, SET, GO

What is it?

(Sample Talking Points)

Goal:

- Create Fire Adapted Communities that have been prepared and can survive a wildfire without life loss.

The problem:

- More and more people are residing in the wildland urban interface without the awareness nor taking personal responsibility in addressing wildfire hazards.
- Oftentimes residents are not heeding evacuation orders and placing themselves and public safety personnel in harm's way.
- Wildfires are occurring more frequently and there is a public expectation that a fire resource can be at every residence when requested, yet this expectation cannot be achieved universally.

READY, SET, GO tenets:

- **READY** – Prepare yourself, your family and your property before a fire
- **SET** – Monitor fire weather / activity and prepare to evacuate
- **GO** – Leave early when directed to by public safety officials
- Stresses personal responsibility for those people who choose to live in the WUI.
- Provides a basic understanding of the wildland fire environment so residents can make informed decisions and ensure safety.
- Collaboration between the public, government and neighbors.
- Promotes a leave early & early return model.
- Teaches how to survive, if trapped.

What makes READY, SET, GO different from other programs?

- Simple, easy to implement & understand
- Cost effective
- Can be done individually
- Can be passively if needed
- Attracts partners to deliver message
- Local fire department able to implement
- Can be transitioned to other hazardous situations

RSG Presentation Feedback Form

“Ready, Set, Go!” Wildfire Action Plan

Please take a couple of minutes to let us know what you think about the “Ready, Set, Go!” Wildfire Action Plan presentation.

1. The video adequately describes the importance of preparing, and then leaving early.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

2. After hearing the presentation, I believe my family and property are prepared for a wildfire.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

3. The presentation did a good job of showing me how to “harden” my home against a wildfire.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

4. The presentation helped me to understand the danger to my home from flying embers.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

5. The presentation showed me the importance of having escape routes and evacuating early.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

6. After hearing the presentation, I understand the challenges faced by firefighters and how I can help them by preparing my family and property.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

7. The presentation gave me the information I need to assemble an emergency supply kit and prepare to evacuate.

Strongly Disagree Somewhat Disagree No Opinion Somewhat Agree Strongly Agree

Please use the space below to give us any other comments you think are important. If you would like to speak with a fire department representative about your personal situation, please include your contact information.

Meeting Report

- **Presenter:**
- **Date of Presentation:**
- **Time of Presentation:**
- **Presentation Made To:**

Contact:

Contact Phone and/or E-Mail

- **Location of Presentation:**
- **No. of People Attending:**
- **Questions from Audience:**

Stock Media Message

Media Advisory
February 10, 2010
Fire Department

Contact:
Phone:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fire Department announces program to save lives and property during wildfires

CITY, STATE – The Fire Department is launching a new program designed to help residents prepare themselves and their property against the threat of wildfires. The program is called, “Ready, Set, Go!” and it is a three-step process that teaches homeowners to get ready, well before a fire approaches, to be set to leave when threatened and, finally, to go – evacuate early – to keep themselves safe and make it easier for firefighters to save homes when a wildfire threatens a neighborhood.

Ready, Set, Go! is the result of a nationwide discussion on how best to protect homes and lives in what the fire service calls the Wildland Urban Interface – the place where development meets natural vegetation – and the Ember Zone, an area where the ember fallout from a wind-driven wildfire can ignite homes.

Using these three simple words – ready, set go – residents can prepare their own Wildfire Action Plan and be prepared should a wildfire occur.

Ready – Take personal responsibility and prepare early so your home is ready in case of a wildfire. Create defensible space by clearing brush away from your home. Use fire-resistant landscaping and harden your home with fire-safe construction features. Assemble emergency supplies and prepare a list of things you want to take with you if you need to evacuate. Plan escape routes.

Set – If a wildfire threatens your neighborhood, act immediately. Assemble your belongings, pack the car. Remove flammable materials from around the house. Monitor the news or fire department Web site for information on the fire.

Go! – Don’t wait to be told to evacuate, leave early! If you’ve followed your Wildfire Action Plan, your home and family are prepared, so leave early to ensure your family’s safety and give firefighters the room they need to operate.

The Fire Department will be holding community meetings and offering presentations about Ready, Set, Go! to community and civic groups over the next few months. The program represents a change in how the fire department prepares for wildfires because residents are being asked to become a part of the solution to the problem of residential property losses during these fires.

Wildfires can be devastating to a community. This year as fire season approaches, the Fire Department is urging residents to remember three simple words: Ready, Set, Go!

News Release Template

NEWS RELEASE

February 10, 2010

Fire Department

Contact:

Phone:

For Immediate Release

Ready, Set, Go! – Fire Department program teaches wildfire preparedness

CITY, STATE – The Fire Department will be holding a community meeting on Wednesday night, February 10, at 7 p.m. in the Community Hall to teach residents how to prepare their homes and families against the threat of a wildfire. The meeting will feature a new program – Ready, Set, Go! – that will instruct homeowners on subjects such as defensible space, fire-safe-construction, fire-resistant landscaping, emergency supplies, evacuation routes and evacuation checklists.

“This year, as fire season approaches, we want residents to remember three simple words: Ready, Set, Go!” said the Fire Chief. “We’re asking homeowners to take personal responsibility for the safety of their homes and families by preparing well before a fire occurs.”

The basics of the program are simple:

- Ready: Prepare yourself, your family and your property before a fire.
- Set: Monitor fire weather and activity, assemble your belongings and supplies and prepare to evacuate.
- Go!: Leave early, or promptly when directed by public safety officials.

At the community meeting, residents will be provided with materials that show them how to prepare. Each resident will be encouraged to create their own Wildfire Action Plan. The plan will include the preparations they can make to increase the safety of their home, checklists for emergency supplies and personal belongings to take if they need to evacuate and safety and survival tips.

“People who live near natural vegetation are at risk from wildfires and the embers they produce,” said the Fire Chief. “Ready, Set, Go! helps people understand these dangers and prepare against them. If homeowners take these actions, they become a part of the solution to property losses from wildfires by increasing our ability to defend their homes while keeping their families safer.”

The meeting will feature speakers, videos and printed materials and firefighters will be available to answer questions. For more information, residents can call the fire department information line at 555-1212.