

CALIFORNIA'S NEWEST FIREWISE COMMUNITY TAKES SHAPE IN PIONEERTOWN

Local residents, organization formed Firewise Community effort to drive property owner engagement around wildfire resilience, possible insurance rate reductions

PIONEERTOWN, CA, UNITED STATES, January 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Local residents in [Pioneertown](#) have formed a new effort to mitigate fire hazards with the formation of the [Pioneertown Area Firewise Community](#). Such Firewise Communities offer a structured approach for local communities to enhance wildfire resilience. This initiative provides resources and education encouraging collaboration among local residents, fire departments and other key stakeholders to bolster fire resistance by reducing fire hazards on properties, creating defensible space around homes and adding fire hardening to structures.

In addition to overall safety, another benefit of being a formally recognized Firewise Community is that the time and work that community members dedicate to making their properties more fire resilient count towards potential homeowner insurance rate discounts, due to recent changes in California insurance legislation



Cal Fire and San Bernardino County Fire officials conducting Pioneertown neighborhood site visits last Fall with local residents to assess wildfire resiliency needs as part of a new Firewise Community effort underway.



Local Pioneertown residents Kerrie Aley, Allan Songer and Sarah Kennington met with fire officials from Cal Fire and the San Bernardino Co Fire Dept last Fall to review neighborhood maps for emergency responders as part of a new effort to create a formal

that now includes Fire Hazard Modeling in the determination of policy rates.

The Pioneertown Area Firewise Community, led by local residents in conjunction with nonprofit Friends of Pioneertown and the Pioneertown Emergency Preparedness Network (PEPN) will host a town meeting on Monday, January 27, 2025 from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm at the Pioneertown Fire Station. Guests will include representatives from Cal Fire, San Bernardino County Fire Dept and High Desert Emergency Action Alliance (HDEAA).

“As a community still affected by past fires, we continue to find ways to help keep our properties, our beloved historic western community and its surrounding landscape safe from future wildfires,” said Kerrie Aley, local resident and lead of the ad hoc Pioneertown Area Firewise Community effort. “This program provides simple, actionable steps all of us can take to fire-harden and create defensible space that can help protect our homes. We encourage everyone to attend this first meeting to learn those steps and how to record their volunteer time so that we can reach our goal of obtaining NFPA Firewise recognition.”

In 2006, the Sawtooth Complex Fire burned nearly 62,000 acres in Pioneertown, Yucca Valley, Morongo Valley and devastated the Pipes Canyon Wildlands Conservancy. Homes, structures and lives were lost over the several days that the fires burned.

“It’s been nearly 20 years since the Sawtooth fire, but sadly today residents are struggling with mandatory insurance premiums that have become cost prohibitive, while others have been forced into California Fair Plan policies as a last resort at exorbitant prices,” said Sarah Kennington, director of PEPN. “These prices are not sustainable, which is why we’re interested to gain insurance cost reductions as part of being a Firewise



Community.”

“I want to recognize our local residents for their dedication and hard work towards making Pioneertown a Firewise Community. Such proactive efforts will help reduce wildfire risks, not only protecting homes but also safeguarding the future of your neighbors,” said San Bernardino County Supervisor Dawn Rowe. “Thank you for your commitment to resilience and safety.”

The Firewise Community program has a set of specific criteria for communities to follow to maximize their home’s resistance to structural damage caused during a wildfire event. The ad hoc Pioneertown Firewise committee has already taken a number of steps in its efforts to become an officially certified Firewise Community by the National

Fire Protection Association (NFPA), including:

- Meetings with CalFire and San Bernardino County Fire leaders to walk each of the 92268 neighborhoods that include Pioneertown, Water Canyon, Kee’s Ranch, Pipes Canyon, Gamma Gulch, Parsons Ranch, Rimrock and Burns Canyon to assess the potential for a Firewise Community designation;
- Developed a three-year Firewise Action Plan; and submitted the application to the NFPA;
- Creating a dedicated website and Facebook page to house important information and status updates;
- Hosting the first town meeting with planned virtual and in-person meetings quarterly.

The final step for formal recognition of the Pioneertown Area Firewise Community will be the completion of a total of 400 hours of volunteer time by the community towards fire resiliency. NFPA will then review the Assessment, Action Plan and Hours together to award Recognition.

Local partner HDEAA also offers additional resources to help Firewise Communities, such as free assessments of properties to create defensible spaces, small grants, the availability of yard tools, trailers and dump runs to help households and businesses establish fire resiliency.

For more information about the Pioneertown Area Firewise Community effort and how to participate, please email FirewisePioneertown@gmail.com or find them on Facebook.

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About Pioneertown

The unincorporated community of Pioneertown is approximately 50 square mile area located in the high desert about 40 miles north of Palm Springs and was formed in 1946 as one of the original Hollywood film ranches for western movies. But this particular movie set – now designated a historical landmark - was unique in that the 1880’s era street was built to be permanent functional buildings serving as residences and businesses for the locals and offering production crews a place to stay, eat and shop. Today, Pioneertown is home to approximately 500 residents and businesses, and is a popular destination for visitors to nearby Joshua Tree

National Park.

The Pioneertown Area, with its lush environmentally sensitive desert habitat nourished by three major washes (Pipes, Chaparrosa and Antelope) is considered an important desert habitat linking the movement of species as the climate changes, and is under consideration as a potential refugio for the conservation of the Joshua Tree.

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