

What is the Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team?

We are a team of EMRHA neighbors, local, state, and federal agency experts in wildfire that work together to help our community become better prepared for, and adapted to, wildfire.

Our goal is to help reduce the risks from wildfire for our neighbors and community. We help our neighbors learn about ways they can better help their family, home and property survive wildfire. We recognize that it is each individual property owner's responsibility to be prepared, but the EMRWPT provides education and information on resources available to help, as well as opportunities to get mitigation work completed. In addition, we work on projects that will help the neighborhood, such as developing escape routes, and reducing fuel loads along our roads.

Who is on the Team?

What does the Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team Do?

Who is on the Team?

Neighborhood Ambassador (NA): Team Coordinator, Risa Lange-Navarro, Elk Meadows resident, retired Fire Behavior Analyst, US Forest Service

Community Members: John Ault, Aleta Fantoni, Rickie van Berkum and Charlie Janson, Elk Meadows residents,

Local Fire District Representative:

- Tristen Jarmon, Hazard Fuels Mitigation Program Mgr., Frenchtown Rural Fire District

Forestry and/or Wildland Fire representative:

- Bob Henderson, Fire Prevention Technician-Ninemile Ranger District/ Lolo National Forest
- Olivia Anderson, Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator, Missoula Unit/Southwest Land Office (SWLO)/MT Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), Primary MT DNRC contact
- Joe Rediske, Fire Operations Specialist-Missoula Unit/Southwest Land Office (SWLO)/MT Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
- Jerry Serabia, Assistant program Manager, Wildfire Mitigation Program-Missoula County Office of Emergency Mgmt.

What does the Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team Do?

Communicating with Property Owners

- EMRWPT members meet with new residents and provide wildfire information packets. Please contact a member if you are new to the community and need a packet. [EMWPT](#)
- Annual Newsletter (June)
- Annual National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day (first Saturday in May)

Help Property Owners Reduce their Risk of Wildfire Damage

Identify and act on our property vulnerabilities – we work with wildfire experts, including local, state, federal agencies, and businesses to use best practices to evaluate and act on our vulnerabilities and try to help make them affordable. This includes but is not limited to:

Evacuation Plan

We created a [map](#) with information designating Evacuation Routes and Evacuation Gathering Areas for our Elk Meadows Ranchettes (EMR). Keeping this plan updated is an ongoing process. Please [download this map](#) and put copies in your vehicles.

Maintain Firewise® Community status

EMR subdivision is a Nationally certified [Firewise®](#) Community in “Good Standings Status”. Being a certified Firewise® Site means: our neighborhood has met the requirements of Firewise USA to get organized, find direction, and take action to reduce wildfire risks in our neighborhood. This includes teaching homeowners how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourage neighbors to work together and take preventative actions to prevent losses

To continue our “Good Standings Status” annually, we must put in/record [voluntary hours](#) used in reducing the wildfire risk in our neighborhood. These volunteer hours come from work done on personal property as well as communal projects. Have you spent any time on wildfire risk reduction on your property or anyplace else in the neighborhood? Please fill out [this form](#) and return it to EMRWPT by November 1st of the current year.

Be sure to inform your homeowners insurance agency that you live in a certified Firewise® Site, as this may qualify you for a discount.

Community Assessment, Action Plan and Wildfire Protection Plan

In 2018, EMRWPT completed a Community Wildfire Preparedness Assessment of Elk Meadows Ranchettes. This assessment identified ways our subdivision is vulnerable to wildfire and identifies actions that the Elk Meadow Ranchettes community can take to lessen the wildfire risk to families, homes, and property. We are currently updating this assessment.

We have developed an Action Plan (Updated Nov 2023) based on the Community Assessment recommendations. This Action Plan is reviewed annually and updated every three years. But for

this to be effective we need to have folks from the community be engaged. Here are our recommendations:

- ✓ Encourage property owners to regularly prepare their home ignition zone prior and during wildfire season. See [I'm a Property Owner – How can I reduce Wildfire Risk](#).
- ✓ New property owners will receive a Firewise packet with information about reducing wildfire risk. (Please contact us if you have not received one: emrwildfireprep@gmail.com)
- ✓ All property owners should receive a Wildfire Risk Site Visit to learn about specific risks and recommended actions to take to protect their property. See [I'm a Property Owner – How can I reduce Wildfire Risk](#).
- ✓ Regularly inform all EMR property owners that residential signs should be reflective. Signs are available through Frenchtown Rural Fire District.
- ✓ Encourage property owners to sign-up for [Smart 911](#).
- ✓ Create and update EMR [Evacuation plan with a map](#) which designates Evacuation Routes and Evacuation Gathering Areas. Make sure property owners are familiar with the plan.
- ✓ Pursue alternate routes out of the subdivision.
- ✓ Install reflective route signs with arrows along the EMR roadways. These signs should be easily seen during smoky conditions. Completed 2024
- ✓ Update Fuel Mitigation Priority Map describing where to begin fuel mitigation projects and assess stand for accuracy.
- ✓ Continue roadside thinning projects to thin both sides of the EMR subdivision roads within the designated right-of-way/easements up to 20ft from road edge where possible depending on where property lines are located. On private property, encourage property owners to perform fuel mitigation treatments and allowing treatments to extend up to 100ft from road edge where possible.
- ✓ Review and update Community Assessment plan
- ✓ Working in conjunction with MT Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation create a two-chain wide shaded fuel break along the common southwest corner common border with EMR near Frenchtown Rural Fire District #3 along Six Mile Road. This includes disposal of fuels by burning or other cost-efficient means. This borders private property only for approximately ½ mile, no roads are currently involved.
- ✓ Install more hydrants along the main Wapiti Road from the junction of Six Mile Road to the top of the hill (at least two) and along Wambli Lane (at least two). Work with the Elk Meadow County Water District on attaining hydrants. Clear areas at least three feet of vegetation around the hydrants to ensure proper access and response
- ✓ Develop Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the subdivision incorporating information from the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Missoula, Montana 2018.
- ✓ Consider installing reflective signs on posts along hazardous curves on Wapiti Road between the bottom and top of the hill.
- ✓ Pursue grants and other means to help reduce costs for any action items we undertake. The EMRHA will not incur any costs so your Homeowners Association dues will not increase

We are updating our [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) that identifies actions that property owners in our neighborhood can implement to reduce wildfire risk as well as community-wide actions, along with identifying potential sources of funding. Our Wildfire Protection Plan will become part of a Missoula County-wide plan.

After we get the draft plan completed, we will bring it to the whole EMRHA for feedback and further input. This review by the community will make sure things that are planned are agreeable by the community that participates.