

Property Owners Frequently Asked Questions to Wildfire Preparedness and Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team (EMRWPT)

Elk Meadows Ranchettes (EMR) is at high risk for wildfires. Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team (EMRWPT) brings together wildfire experts to:

Figure out what needs to be done to protect both people and property in the event of wildfire.

Provide guidance to property owners so they can use best practices to protect their families and property.

What is the Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team (EMRWPT)?

We are a team of EMR 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 road.

You can contact us at [EMWPT](#) or by mail at PO Box 633, Frenchtown, MT 59834

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, Damian Cremins, Rickie van Berkum and Charlie Janson, Elk Meadows residents,

Local Fire District Representative:

- Joe Calnan, Chief-Frenchtown Rural Fire District
- Tristen Jarmon, Hazard Fuels Mitigation Program Mgr., Frenchtown Rural Fire District
- Ben Murphy, Hazard Fuels Mitigation Program, Frenchtown Rural Fire District

Forestry and/or Wildland Fire representative:

- Bob Henderson, Fire Prevention Technician-Ninemile Ranger District/ Lolo National Forest, Primary Forest Service contact
- Anna Henderson-Yarrow, Fire Prevention Specialist- 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
- Kristin Mortenson, Community Preparedness & Fire Prevention Specialist, Southwest Land Office (SWLO)/MT Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
- Joe Rediske, Fire Operations Specialist-Missoula Unit/Southwest Land Office (SWLO)/MT Dept of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
- Max Rebholz, Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator-Missoula County Office of Emergency Mgmt.

What does the Elk Meadows Ranchettes Wildfire Preparedness Team Do?

Communicate 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](#)
- Send out an Annual Newsletter (May or June)
- Coordinate an Annual 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 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. [LINK to pdf map](#) Please download this map and put copies in your vehicles.

***Maintain Firewise® USA Community status**

EMR subdivision is a Nationally certified Firewise® USA Community in “Good Standings Status”. Being a certified Firewise® USA 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 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? If so, Please fill out this form and return it to EMRWPT by November 1st of the current year. [LINK to pdf Form](#)

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

***Community Assessment, Action Plan and Wildfire Protection Plan**

As part of that effort in 2018, EMRWPT completed a Community Wildfire Preparedness Assessment of the community 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 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 to be engaged. The Action Plan includes:

- ✓ Encourage property owners to regularly prepare their home ignition zone prior and during wildfire season.
- ✓ New property owners will receive a Firewise packet with information about reducing wildfire risk.
- ✓ All property owners should receive a Wildfire Risk Site Visit to learn about specific risks and recommended actions to take to protect their property.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Update EMR Evacuation plan with 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 Evacuation route signs with arrows along the EMR roadways. These signs should be easily seen during smoky conditions.
- ✓ 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. If priority is on private property, encourage property owners to perform fuel mitigation treatments 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

In addition we are developing a 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. To learn more visit: <https://www.missoulacounty.us/government/public-safety/office-of-emergency-management/community-wildfire-protection-plan>

After we get a 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.

I'm a property owner, how do I determine the wildfire risk to my property ?

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) provides **free of charge Home Wildfire Risk Assessments**. You can schedule a wildfire expert to come to your property and make recommendations to help you decrease your risk of property damage and loss from wildfires. Property owners are encouraged to request a Wildfire Risk Site Visit of your residence/property to help not only you protect it, but to help emergency responders protect it should a wildfire threaten it. Having a Site Visit done could also lower your home insurance.

How can I reduce the wildfire risk to my property?

EMRWPT has posted the Firewise® USA poster, “Reducing Wildfire Risks in the Home Ignition Zone”, on our garbage enclosure. Or you can go to [Firewise® USA](#) and look for the publication “Reducing Wildfire Risks in the Home Ignition Zone” as well as [Montana Wildfire Information](#) for more information. Property owners should review their property continually for wildfire risks.

To help you review your property the Missoula County Fire Protection Association created a Top 10 Wildfire Preparedness Tips on YouTube, here's the YouTube link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooSo9Xkpmss&t=103s>

After I identify the wildfire risks to my property, where can I get physical and/or financial help if needed?

There is a list of local contractors [LINK to pdf List](#) that work in conjunction with [Frenchtown Rural Fire District](#) (406-626-5791). Other local organizations that can help are [Wildfire Ready Missoula](#) and [Bitter Root Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.](#) All these

organizations, including Frenchtown Rural Fire District, use a grant program where the property owner pays 25% and the grant pays for 75% of the total cost.

What should I do in preparation for fire season?

Remove pine needles and other flammables from around your buildings and propane tanks. Clean off your roof and gutters of any flammable debris, etc. For more information go to [Wildfire Adapted Missoula County](#), [Montana Wildfire Information](#), [Missoula County Fire Protection Association \(MCFPA\)](#), and/or [Firewise® USA](#).

Sign up for Smart 911 to receive local emergency alerts. [Smart911 More information](#)

Install a Reflective Address Sign: Have a **REFLECTIVE** address sign posted at the beginning of your driveway to help fire fighters and first responders identify your home in an emergency. Frenchtown Rural Fire District has a supply of reflective signs available at no cost, contact the [Frenchtown Rural Fire District](#), 406-626-5791 for details. For those property owners that have decorative address signs that aren't reflective, please consider adding a reflective sign, it could make a big difference during an emergency.

Clear areas around fire hydrants to ensure proper access and response. At least 3' of vegetation clearance around the hydrant is recommended.

I've cleared out branches and debris – what do I do with it?

You can burn the natural fuels on your property with a valid and activated [Missoula County Burn Permit](#). There are restrictions on when you can burn listed on the website.

Call [Frenchtown Rural Fire District](#) (406-626-5791) or [email](#) to have that fuel chipped. There is a size limit on what they can chip which is 6 inches in diameter and smaller.

Elk Meadows Ranchettes has a communal burn pile at the junction of Wapiti Road and Wambli Lane. This location is on private property. The pile is burned in conjunction with National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day which is on the first Saturday in May each year. You can bring your natural, preferably dry fuels to this pile starting in March and up to the day of the burn. Since this pile is on private property, please do not drive over the property when conditions are muddy. A letter is sent out to all property owners each April with further information about the annual National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day.

In the event of a wildfire (or other disaster) how do we get out?

EMRWPT has developed a map with information on Evacuation Routes and Emergency Evacuation Gathering Areas [LINK to pdf map](#) that you should become familiar with. EMRWPT highly recommends you download this map and keep copies in each of your vehicles. Please remember that two of the evacuation routes are on private property and should be only used when a designated emergency occurs.

Why are people removing trees along roadsides?

Thinning (not total tree removal) the trees along your property that border the roads will help decrease the wildfire risk during an evacuation. Ladder fuels (fuels from the ground up into the tops of the trees) can create a tunnel of fire that could make it impossible to pass by. We encourage you to thin the roadside trees, within at least 20ft of the road, on your own property. Thinning means removing trees/vegetation spacing 15ft between the branch tips of trees. For additional advice/guidance contact [EMWPT](#) or [Frenchtown Rural Fire District](#).