

From: Anchorage Fire Department
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Subject: Community Message: Firewise Community Site Award Sought for Rabbit Creek Area

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Anchorage, AK) – Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) and Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) are teaming up to prepare for wildfires and other natural disasters. Special recognition as a Firewise Community Site will be pursued by AFD and RCCC, following completion of the activities outlined in this press release. Anchorage homeowners are reminded about the close call that occurred in July of 2016, when an abandoned warming fire escaped Chugach State Park lands and threatened hundreds of residents along the Turnagain Arm, for over a week. “The goal for this effort is for homeowners to prepare themselves for a similar event that could occur with very little warning again this spring or summer”, said AFD Chief, Jodie Hettrick. “We’ve had two cool, cloudy summers since 2016, which have erased that wake-up event from our memories. Anchorage transitions rapidly from winter to very dry spring conditions, annually, and we all need to roll up our sleeves and prepare, once again, for a major wildfire”, she added.

There are several events scheduled for this spring to assist homeowners in the RCCC area in preparing for fire season. There will be a kick-off event on Thursday, April 11, 2019 at Golden View Middle School parking lot from 6-7 PM to give homeowners (and students) a chance to meet AFD Firefighters, view the apparatus used to fight wildland fires and sign up for a free home inspection. Alaska Division of Forestry (ADOF) will display one of the Division’s engines used to combat wildfires. Anchorage Police Department (APD) will be on hand to answer questions about evacuations during wildfires. MOA Emergency Management will also be there to answer questions about assistance available during an evacuation, including housing and meals. Integrated Robotics will be on hand to discuss and demonstrate the new wildfire detection system being evaluated by AFD this fire season. The regular RCCC meeting will follow the outdoor display at 7 PM.

Other events include activities to recognize Wildland Fire Prevention and Preparedness Week, include:

- * Chipper Day on Saturday, May 4, 2019 (brought to you by State Farm Insurance and the National Fire Protection Agency through a mini-grant). RCCC residents are encouraged to prune their tree limbs and remove dangerous brush and vegetation from around homes. Stack limbs in front of your home (clear of road right-of-way) for free pick up and recycling (the following week of May 6th).

* RCCC homeowners are encouraged to sign up for a visit by AFD firefighters to inspect your home and property for outdoor fire hazards. Cost-share grants for tree removal will be available again this year!

* Firewise public service announcements will resume during the month of May to provide a reminder to all residents and visitors to our state about being safe with fire.

* Wood lots will commence operation during early May, as well, to provide homeowners with a safe alternative to of woody debris from Firewise treatments and other brush/tree removal. A schedule of opening dates and hours of operation will be announced by April 15th.

Please, be sure to check on and adhere to local burning restrictions BEFORE you light a fire. Call the AFD BURN HOTLINE FIRST! at (907)267-5020 Remove flammable materials like leaves, dry grass, and wood piles within 30 feet and spruce trees within 15 feet of your home or cabin. Create a “defensible space” around your home to give firefighters a safe environment to work.

Homeowners working together can make neighborhoods safer by creating more defensible space, and pre-planning for safe evacuations, if needed. Understanding how fire may travel through your neighborhood will help mitigate the risk of fire threatening your home. Having a plan with your family to secure pets, important papers, prescriptions, and photos will save time if you need to leave suddenly.

To summarize, follow these steps:

1) Create defensible space around your home. Get help by requesting a free home inspection on-line at:

<http://www.muni.org/Departments/Fire/Wildfire/Pages/FirewiseHomeAssessments.aspx>

2) Prepare and practice your family’s plan for what to do if a wildfire threatens your home.

3) Know the steps to take when evacuating your home when fire officials warn of imminent danger.

The memories of recent fires can be quickly rekindled; In addition to the McHugh Fire that threatened hundreds of homes in 2016, the 2015 Sockeye Fire near Willow burned 55 homes. In the 2014 Funny River fire near Soldotna, five structures were lost. 2019 marks the 23-year anniversary of the 1996 Miller’s Reach Fire where over 400 structures burned. Take responsibility for living in a wildfire-prone state. Learning to live with fire is how we can save lives and prevent property from burning...when wildland fire happens. BE READY!

Links:

Anchorage Fire:

<https://www.muni.org/Departments/Fire/Wildfire/Pages/MyFirewiseHome.aspx><https://www.muni.org/Departments/Fire/Wildfire/Pages/MyFirewiseHome.aspx#_blank>

Alaska Division of Forestry: <http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/>

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