

TRI-COUNTY FIRESAFE WORKING GROUPS
Lewis & Clark County Post-Fire FEMA Fire Risk Mitigation Grants
Guidelines & Criteria

OUR PROGRAM: *Creating Fire Adapted Communities*

www.tcfswg.org

Tri-County Firesafe Working Group (TCFSWG) and the organization's many partners are committed to promoting wildfire prevention education and defensible space mitigation. TCFSWG obtains a variety of state and federal grant sources to assist private landowners in high wildfire risk areas; otherwise known as the wildland-urban interface (WUI), to conduct mitigation efforts on their lands and structures. As a result of the 2019 North Hills Fire, future FEMA funds are available for mitigation efforts for qualified applicants in Lewis & Clark County, MT

WHY YOU SHOULD APPLY: *You Make the Choice; Defensible Space Makes the Difference!*

As someone that lives in an area at high risk to wildfire, it is your responsibility to prepare your home and property in advance of future wildfires. There are mitigation steps that homeowners can take to reduce the risks, with the most important efforts occurring on and immediately around the home. However, you don't have to take on this important task by yourself. TCFSWG is here to assist you with funding and technical assistance. If you are a property owner living in the wildfire risk zones of Lewis & Clark County, MT and want to partner with TRCFSWG to make your property more likely to survive a wildfire, submit an application and schedule a risk assessment of your property. Here is a quick guide to the process.

Eligibility: Private landowners, homeowners and businesses located in the WUI within Lewis & Clark County. Eligible activities include; Defensible Space Mitigation (around the home). Hazardous Fuel Mitigation (on a landscape level within 2 miles of the home). Ignition Resistant Construction (IRC) (*Not eligible for IRC without having completed defensible space first*)

Funding: *We Share the Cost!*

- Project costs are matched by the property owner on a percentage of the grants utilized of the total project costs (75/25). Defensible space and IRC will be treated as two separate projects as it relates to project cost totals.
- Homeowner in-kind will be considered at the Federal volunteer rate (\$25.43/hr)
- Defensible Space contractors will submit two invoices; 1.) to TCFSWG for 75% of the project costs; and 2.) 25% (or determined match) to the private landowner.
- TCFSWG will reimburse homeowners for approved IRC costs.

Program Process: *Apply. Assess. Mitigate.*

1. Submit an Application: Applications may be submitted at any time, until **January 15, 2020**. **Applications can be found online at:** www.tcfswg.org
2. Schedule an Assessment: Assessments will be conducted by TCFSWG representatives to identify wildfire risks, mitigation needs and estimated costs. Assessments will be scheduled once applications are submitted and will be completed by **January 30, 2020**.
3. TCFSWG will prepare individual cost-benefit analysis and prepare grant applications for FEMA funding. (**Mid-February 2020**).
4. If the grant is awarded, mitigation could possibly begin in the **fall of 2020** through **2021**.
5. Qualified projects will be awarded in the order applications are received.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why should I prepare for a wildfire?

A: The risk of catastrophic wildfire is a real and serious threat!

In Lewis and Clark County, it is not a question of if a wildfire will impact your home, but when. Living in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) comes with responsibilities and challenges. There is an opportunity to significantly reduce the potential for property destruction in the WUI, but this opportunity depends on you! By creating and maintaining effective defensible space and retrofitting your home with safer materials, you can make your “neighborhood” safer. A well-mitigated home will give firefighters the opportunity to do their job more safely. Firefighters will not risk their lives to defend a home that does not have defensible space. Even if firefighters are unable to directly protect your home during a wildfire, implementing effective wildfire mitigation will still increase your home’s chances for survival.

Q: What is wildfire mitigation?

A: Wildfire mitigation is the implementation of various measures designed to minimize the destructive effects a wildfire has on your property. Wildfire mitigation increases the chances your home will survive a wildfire. It does not **guarantee** that it will survive.

Some actions are designed to modify the forest environment surrounding a structure or access. Others focus on changing the construction of your home itself to improve its ability to withstand the ember storm of a wildfire without being dependent upon fire suppression resources. For additional information visit www.firewise.org

Q: What is the wildfire risk assessment and how much does it cost?

A: The assessment is FREE to the property owner.

Once you submit an application, a TCFSWG representative will conduct a formal wildfire risk assessment. Together, you will examine the trees and other vegetation in your defensible space zones, as well as areas on the exterior of your home vulnerable to wildfire risk.

Q: How far out does defensible space go from my house?

A: Defensible space is categorized by zones and varies from site to site based on topography.

- 1) Zone 1: Home Ignition Zone, contains the home/structure itself and at least 30 feet (this varies by slope and other factors).
- 2) Zone 2: Moderate Fuel Reduction Zone, depends on the slope of the ground and where the structure is built. Within this zone, the continuity and arrangement of vegetation is modified.
- 3) Zone 3: Managed Wildland Zone, may extend at least 200 feet from a structure and is an area of native vegetation.

For additional information visit www.firewise.org

Q: Will you make me clear cut my property?

A: No! A TCFSWG representative will help you develop a wildfire mitigation forestry plan to enhance the overall health of your forest and land, which is not the same as clear cutting.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A properly mitigated home will usually have clumps of trees, openings and isolated individual trees. The goal is to break up forest continuity by creating large openings and separation between trees, in an attempt, to change fire behavior. Proper crown separation and removal of ladder fuels can help change an intense crown fire (a wildfire burning in the tree-tops) into a less threatening ground fire. It is much more likely for a home to survive if the fire approaches from the ground.

Most property owners find their property to be more aesthetically pleasing after implanting their forestry plan. The forest around your home becomes healthier and more diverse.

Q: What changes will I need to make to my home/buildings?

A: A TCFSWG representative will work with you to identify the vulnerabilities in your home's construction and provide solutions.

The building materials your home is constructed with greatly influence its vulnerability to ignition. Sometimes, simple actions such as adding vent screens, gutter caps or new siding may remedy it. Every home differs, so the actions needed will be varied.

Q: What is the landowner's responsibility after mitigation activities are completed?

A: Maintaining defensible space requires annual maintenance and is the responsibility of the landowner. Participating landowners must sign an agreement to maintain the fuel modification/vegetation work for a minimum of 10 years or until they no longer own the property.

Maintain your defensible space annually, by removing debris, shrubs, and any other unwanted vegetation that accumulates during the year. For additional information visit www.firewise.org