



NEWS RELEASE

Cook County Firewise Program Receives Community Grant
By Cheryl Walimaa, Cook County Firewise

The Cook County Firewise program has just received a firewise community grant from the State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to complete wildfire hazard assessments throughout the county. These areas will include the fire districts and unorganized territories in Schroeder, Tofte, Grand Marais, Colville and the Arrowhead Trail areas in Hovland. This grant will also allow us to host three separate slash disposal days, where property owners can bring their slash to designated areas to dispose of properly.

Letters will be mailed out this fall and in the spring to notify homeowners when a representative will be in their area to complete an assessment. Homeowners will be asked to notify us if they do not wish to have an assessment completed or to notify us if they have a gated/no trespassing property and would like us to complete an assessment on their property. The information on the assessments is for the homeowner and fire responders only, and is not public information. A copy is given to the homeowner, the fire department and original copies kept at the Cook County Auditor's Office for the Firewise Committee.

The main purpose of these types of grants is to educate homeowners on how they can reduce the risk of fire damage to their home and property in the event of a wildland fire. Firewise grants are 50/50 cost share grants, where the Cook County Firewise program and volunteer fire departments match the grant amount through volunteer hours and donations (in-kind matches). The grants have also aided three volunteer fire departments in building static tanks and dry hydrants within their fire districts, and have been instrumental in opening several slash disposal sites throughout the county with the help of area associations, fire departments, MN DNR and the USFS.

The Firewise Committee also has a 50/50 Cost Share Grant available to homeowners that will reimburse them up to \$900 for fuel reduction and mitigation projects on their property. To qualify for this program a Level 2 Firewise Assessment must be completed if one has not already been done on your property. Reimbursable costs incur once the coordinator for the grant has been to your property and has created a plan with you. Costs incurred before that time are not reimbursable. To sign-up for this grant or if you have any questions or concerns about other Firewise Grants, please contact Cheryl Walimaa at 218-387-3688 or visit our website at www.boreal.org/fireinfo/.