

Forest Gate Homeowner Association (FGHOA)

Community Wildfire Action Plan 2026-2028



FIREWISE USA®
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Date Completed: 13 Nov 2025

Action Plan Goals

Education and Outreach Goals:

- Goals should empower residents with wildfire preparedness knowledge and resources through educational campaigns, brochures, and community events. These efforts will foster shared responsibility and collaboration to safeguard properties from wildfires.

Home Hardening Goals:

- Goals should encourage residents to adopt wildfire-resistant home measures, such as using fire-resistant materials windows.

Defensible Space | Fuel Reduction Goals:

- Goals should create and maintain defensible space to reduce wildfire risks by clearing combustible vegetation, maintaining a well-watered landscape and regularly cleaning roofs and gutters. Community events like chipper days encourage yard waste disposal, while fuel treatment and educating about Zone Zero enhance fire prevention and proactive property protection.

Evacuation Planning and Wildfire Preparedness Goals:

- The goal is to enhance community-wide strategies for safety during wildfire emergencies by creating accessible evacuation maps, conducting evacuation drills with local agencies, and encouraging residents to join communication plans and sign up for emergency alerts. These efforts will familiarize residents with evacuation routes, reduce confusion, and improve efficiency during emergencies.

Community Description

The Forest Gate Homeowner Association Community consists of a 200-acre neighborhood with fifty 2½ to 5-acre homes inhabited by 110-125 residents. The community sits on the southern edge of the Black Forest at the intersection of Burgess and Vollmer Roads. This area is part of the El Paso County wildland-urban interface, where structures and other human developments meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation. The overall habitat is predominantly Native Ponderosa pine forest (75%) and foothill prairie grasses (25%). Other vegetation includes Gambel oak and Douglas fir. Common wildlife includes mule deer, pronghorns, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, bobcats, squirrels and bats. Recent sightings of elk in the neighborhood reflect the pressures of urbanization throughout the region.

The community has two primary routes for ingress and egress. A circular system of paved 2 lane roadways within the HOA are passable during winter-weather conditions and lead to major evacuation arteries to the north and south via Vollmer Road as well as east and west via Burgess Road. During 2013 Black Forest wildfire that came within ½ mile, the neighborhood was evacuated without difficulty.

The Black Forest Fire & Rescue (BFFR) is 2.6 miles (4 minutes) from the Forest Gate Community. It provides structural firefighting, wildland firefighting, technical rescue, and EMS transport. As a rural neighborhood without fire hydrants, the BFFR maintains two permanent non pressurized water tanks at the northern and southern ends of the neighborhood for firefighting.

Through the collective efforts of all homeowners - not just a few, the National Fire Protection Association has nationally recognized us every year since 2014 for meeting annual FIREWISE requirements.

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Action Plan Year 1 (2026)

Education and Outreach Goals:

1. Organize an annual outreach event to engage residents and provide a learning experience on best business practices related to wildfires and wildfire mitigation.
2. Provide input to the HOA quarterly newsletters focusing on fire mitigation issues pertinent to the neighborhood.
3. Provide a Firewise mitigation welcome packet to all new residents within 30 days of move in.
4. Collaborate with CSFS, El Paso County, and the BFFR partnership programs (**a Risk Asmt Recommendation**).

Home Hardening Goals:

Risk Asmt notes > 75% of all homes meet all hardening goals. Goal is 100%

1. Annually - CLEAR roof, deck and gutters of pine needles and other debris.
2. Annually - RAKE AND REMOVE all pine needles and other flammable debris from 5 feet around the foundation of your home and deck.
3. Annually - REMOVE branches that hang over the roof and chimney.

Defensible Space | Fuel Reduction Goals:

The Extended Zone: 30'-100'. Efforts in this zone are focused on ways to keep fire on the ground and to get fire that may be active in tree crowns (crown fire) to move to the ground (surface fire), where it will be less intense. Risk Asmt notes > 75% of homes have treated vegetation and the Goal is to continue raising this level.

1. Watch for hazards associated with ladder fuels. The chance of a surface fire climbing into the trees is reduced in a forest where surface fuels are widely separated, and low tree branches are removed.
2. Tree crown spacing of 6-10 feet is suggested. Consider creating openings or meadows between small clumps of trees so fire must transition to the ground to keep moving.
3. Any approved method of slash treatment is acceptable in this zone, including removal, piling and burning, lop and scatter, or mulching.
4. Lop-and-scatter or mulching treatments should be minimized in favor of treatments that reduce the amount of woody material in the zone. The farther this material is from the home, the better.
5. Avoid creating continuous areas of wood chips on the ground when chipping logs and/or slash.
6. INTEGRATE EFFORTS TO ENCOMPASS >100' FROM HOMES with a primary goal the retention of vigorous trees and the removal of low vigor trees beyond the defensive zones.

Evacuation Planning and Wildfire Preparedness Goals:

1. **Ensure you are signed up for your local emergency notification system.**
<https://www.elpasoteller911.org/peak-alerts>
2. Create a Family Evacuation Plan and rehearse it: Where to go When to go ... How to get there Who to tell when safe.
3. Annually check fire extinguishers on hand and teach your household how to use them.
4. Ensure household knows where gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are located and how to use them.
5. **Make sure you can get out of your property.** Maintain at least 10 feet between tree crowns, thinning a minimum of 30 feet back from each side of the driveway from the house to the main access road. Remove ladder fuels beneath trees after thinning.
6. **Thin dense dog hair trees** along Vollmer & Shaugnessey Roads (our evacuation routes), especially those under larger trees where they risk becoming ladder fuel.

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RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

Date Completed: 13 Nov 2025

Action Plan Year 2 (2027)

Education and Outreach Goals:

1. Organize an annual outreach event to engage residents and provide a learning experience on best business practices related to wildfires and wildfire mitigation.
2. Provide input to the HOA quarterly newsletters focusing on fire mitigation issues pertinent to the neighborhood.
3. Provide a Firewise mitigation welcome packet to all new residents within 30 days of move in.
4. Collaborate with CSFS, El Paso County, and the BFFR partnership programs (**Risk Asmt Recommendation**).

Home Hardening Goals:

1. Annually - CLEAR roof, deck and gutters of pine needles and other debris.
2. Annually - RAKE AND REMOVE all pine needles and other flammable debris from 5 feet around the foundation of your home and deck.
3. Annually - REMOVE branches that hang over the roof and chimney.
4. Post signs at the end of the driveway with your house number that are noncombustible, reflective and easily visible to emergency responders.
5. Maintain an ember-resistant zone beneath decks by removing all flammable materials.
6. Screen attic, roof, eaves and foundation vents with 1/8-inch metal mesh.

Defensible Space | Fuel Reduction Goals:

The Intermediate Zone: 5'- 30'. This zone is designed to minimize a fire's intensity and its ability to spread while significantly reducing the likelihood a structure ignites because of radiant heat. **Risk Asmt notes only 50-74% of homes have properly treated vegetation in this zone - our goal is to increase this to >75%.**

1. MOW GRASSES to 4 inches tall or less.
2. REMOVE ENOUGH TREES to create at least 10 feet of space between crowns. Measure from the outermost branch of one tree to the nearest branch on the next tree.
3. Small groups of two or three trees may be left in some areas of Zone 2. Spacing of 30 feet should be maintained between remaining tree groups to ensure fire doesn't jump from one group to another.
4. REMOVE LADDER FUELS under remaining trees. This is any vegetation that can bring fire from the ground up into taller fuels.
5. Prune tree branches to a height of 6-10 feet from the ground or a third of the total height of the tree, whichever is less.
6. Remove stressed, diseased, dead or dying trees and shrubs. This reduces the amount of vegetation available to burn and improves forest health.
7. Keep any woodpile at least 30 feet away from the home.
8. DISPOSE OF SLASH from thinning trees and shrubs by chipping, hauling to a disposal site. Any accumulation of slash that's chipped or otherwise should be 30 feet or more from the home.

Evacuation Planning and Wildfire Preparedness Goals:

1. **Ensure you are signed up for your local emergency notification system.**
<https://www.elpasoteller911.org/peak-alerts>
2. Create a Family Evacuation Plan and rehearse it: Where to go When to go ... How to get there Who to tell when safe.
3. Annually check fire extinguishers on hand and teach your household how to use them.
4. Know where gas, electric, and water main shut-off controls are located and how to use them.
5. **Make sure you can get out of your property.** Maintain at least 10 feet between tree crowns, thinning a minimum of 30 feet back from each side of the driveway from the house to the main access road. Remove ladder fuels beneath trees after thinning.
6. **Thin dense dog hair trees** along Vollmer & Shaugnessey Roads (our evacuation routes), especially those under larger trees where they risk becoming ladder fuel.

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Action Plan Year 3 (2028)

Education and Outreach Goals:

1. Annually - Organize an annual outreach event to engage residents and provide a learning experience on best business practices related to wildfires and wildfire mitigation.
2. Annually - Provide input to the HOA quarterly newsletters focusing on fire mitigation issues pertinent to the neighborhood.
3. Annually - Provide a Firewise mitigation welcome packet to all new residents within 30 days of move in.
4. Annually - Collaborate with CSFS, El Paso County, and the BFFR partnership programs (**Risk Asmt Recommendation**).

Home Hardening Goals:

1. Annually - CLEAR roof, deck and gutters of pine needles and other debris.
2. Annually - RAKE AND REMOVE all pine needles and other flammable debris from 5 feet around the foundation of your home and deck.
3. Annually - REMOVE branches that hang over the roof and chimney.
4. Screen or wall-in stilt foundations and decks with 1/8-inch metal mesh.
5. Use tempered glass for windows; two or more panes are recommended.
6. Create 6 inches of vertical clearance between the ground and home siding.
7. Replace combustible fencing or gates, at least within 5 feet of the home.
8. When replacing or repairing decks, use ignition-resistant building materials like composites.

Defensible Space | Fuel Reduction Goals:

The Immediate Zone: 0' - 5'. The area nearest the home. This zone requires the most vigilant work in order to reduce or eliminate ember ignition and direct flame contact with your home. **Risk Asmt notes > 75% of homes have treated vegetation and created a combustible-free area – our goal is to improve that.**

1. REMOVE all flammable vegetation, including shrubs, slash, mulch and other woody debris.
2. PRUNE tree branches hanging over the roof and remove all fuels within 10 feet of the chimney.
3. RAKE AND DISPOSE of pine needles, dead leaves, mulch and other organic debris within 5 feet of all decks and structures.
4. DO NOT STORE items under decks.
5. Do not store firewood or other combustible materials inside this zone.
6. Keep the corner areas of a building clear of combustible materials as corners experience higher temperatures and risk.
7. Keep the areas under windows clear of combustible materials as they are more vulnerable to flames entering the structure.
8. Use low-growing herbaceous (non-woody) plants as shrubs and trees are not recommended in zone.

Evacuation Planning and Wildfire Preparedness Goals:

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5. **Make sure you can get out of your property.** Maintain at least 10 feet between tree crowns, thinning a minimum of 30 feet back from each side of the driveway from the house to the main access road. Remove ladder fuels beneath trees after thinning.
6. **Thin dense dog hair trees** along Vollmer & Shaugnessey Roads (our evacuation routes), especially those under larger trees where they risk becoming ladder fuel.