



# Position Statement

## Collaborative Efforts for Reducing Community Risk in the Wildland Urban Interface

### Problem

The risk of wildland and wildland-urban interface fires is increasing in both significance and prevalence in the United States. Reasons for this trend include; the growing density and decreasing health of our forests; a hotter and dryer climate trend; and the increase in the number and density of homes built in the wildland-urban interface. The statistics show a general trend of an increasing size of wildland fires, an increase in number of homes destroyed, and an increase in both suppression costs and of financial losses due to wildland-urban interface fires.

Whatever specific solutions are enacted for this growing problem must be collaborative. The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) consists of three tenets in which these collaborative solutions can be explored: landscape scale forest management, the promotion of fire adapted communities, and collaborative response. The intent of this position is to focus on the second tenet – collaborative action in promotion of fire adapted communities (FAC) to reduce risk. In general terms, the actions taken by a community before a wildland-urban interface (WUI) fire have a direct impact on the survivability of the values at risk – people, property and resources – once a fire starts. Cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders in the community is critical to the success of their fire adaptability. The local government fire service is a key stakeholder and one that can and should be a leader in developing, implementing and monitoring the initiatives utilized by the community to accomplish this goal. At the same time, support from the state and federal levels in the form of coordination and programmatic support for resources that are vital to the mission must continue for locals to have a real impact on the national priorities outlined in the Cohesive Strategy. By focusing on maximum utilization of local government fire service resources and cooperation from partners, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) will promote the continued cohesive efforts to make America's communities adapted to wildland fire for when, not if, a fire will strike.

### Position

The IAFC believes in collaborative efforts to reduce risk in communities and to be better adapted to wildland and WUI fires. The IAFC is well-positioned to mediate and promote solutions involving multiple levels of governmental, private, and non-governmental organizations. The IAFC through its Wildland Fire Policy Committee chooses to focus on the following areas in order to promote the greatest collaborative effort working toward addressing the national wildfire risk:

1. Risk assessment – The IAFC believes that wildland fire risk is the chance of fire start based on the presence and activity of causative agents and the chance of suffering harm or loss. Hazard assessments are key in determining this risk and include a wide variety of considerations such as fire history, forest health, fuel types, loads and condition, weather patterns and topography. The IAFC believes these assessments are crucial first steps in FAC. The IAFC promotes the necessity and importance of risk identification and assessments, and supports its members and fire and emergency services officials in completing these first steps.
2. Education – Due to the complexity of the challenges and the transient nature of the populations we serve, consistent, collaborative, multi-pronged national education programs are imperative to increase awareness, improve implementation and reinforce the message of FAC to all stakeholders, most importantly the public at large. The IAFC believes that continued development, implementation and monitoring of programs such as Ready, Set, Go!, which includes non-traditional approaches such as English as a second language and youth resources, is crucial to the long-term viability and acceptance of FAC by the public and stakeholders in each community. Additionally, the IAFC believes that education initiatives are necessary for fire departments to learn how to be full partners in FAC. Programs such as Fire Department Exchange (FDX) and Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TRES) are key components to ensure that local fire departments are fully able to lead risk-reduction efforts in their communities.
3. Planning – IAFC recognizes the need for community planning to map out strategies for accomplishing risk reduction. The development, implementation and frequent review of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are a priority component to long-term success. Continued stakeholder partnerships and collaboration build the foundation for any successful FAC effort including the development of this living document. In addition, the IAFC believes that every community should review codes, ordinances and standards to ensure they reflect the solution-oriented goals to address the community's specific wildfire risk and are inclusive of all-hazard risks.
4. Mitigation – The IAFC believes that mitigation is a vital, multi-faceted and ongoing process that requires stakeholder collaboration and is cross boundary. Wildland fire does not consider jurisdictional boundaries, in effect, successful mitigation programs extend past those lines and require public and private cooperation. Each individual in a community at risk has a vested interest and an important role in mitigation from identifying risk to raising awareness to the implementation of focused programs. Actions including education, fire prevention, training, fuels reduction including prescribed fire, home hardening are all important mitigation strategies which contribute to FAC.

It is the intent of the International Association of Fire Chiefs to promote any and all activities which work to improve collaborative risk reduction in our communities through any of the aforementioned strategies. It is in the best interest of all our constituents to attack these challenges head on and move toward a more collaborative and coordinated effort to make our communities fire adapted.

**Submitted by the IAFC Wildland Fire Policy Committee**  
**Adopted by IAFC Board of Directors: 13 September 2018**