BUILD A SAFER BLOCK, ONE BBQ AT A TIME

A Toolkit for Neighborhoods to Host a Firewise Get Together.



WELCOME TO THE BBQ TOOLKIT!

What This Is

This toolkit is a simple, step-by-step guide to help you host a casual neighborhood BBQ with a wildfire safety twist. It's not a meeting. It's not a lecture. It's a fun way to bring neighbors together, share a meal, and spark small steps toward a safer street.

Who It's For

Anyone who wants to bring neighbors together, start talking about wildfire safety, and help make their street easier to protect.

Why It Matters

Wildfire safety is a team effort. When neighbors know each other, they respond faster, share better info, and look out for one another. **A block that talks together is a block that's ready together.**

Inside, You'll Find

Ways to plan, invite & connect - with ready-to-use tools to coordinate a great get-together!

Final Suggestion!

It doesn't have to be a BBQ at all. Think about what fits your block best:

- Ice Cream Social
- Chili Cook-Off
- Coffee & Donuts Morning
- Lemonade Stand for the Kids
- Potluck Brunch

The point is the same - get neighbors together, make it fun, and slip in just enough Firewise to keep everyone safer.

Let's get started.
Your BBQ could be the spark that makes your neighborhood safer.

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BBQ STREET PARTY CHECKLIST

For Neighborhood Firewise Meet-Ups

1. PLAN THE BASICS

□ Pick a date and time
□ Choose a location (driveway, cul-de-sac, open space)
□ Get a few neighbors to help
□ Decide on food (grill, potluck, or combo)
□ Gather tables, chairs, coolers, trash cans

2. INVITE THE NEIGHBORS

□ Make simple flyers or door hangers
□ Send a text or email to your block
□ Go door to door if you can
□ Remind people the day before
□ Post on social media if you have a site

3. BRING FIREWISE INTO THE MIX

□ Print a neighborhood map
□ Have a sign-up sheet for folks interested in helping
Bring simple handouts (fire prep tips, evacuation list)
□ Set out a "Go Bag" example if you can
□ Have a 2–3 minute talk ready (see Firewise Talk page)

4. KEEP IT FUN

□ Name tags or chalk to write names on shirt
□ Music (portable speaker or phone)
□ Simple games or activities for kids
□ Raffle or prize for those who pin their house or sign up

5. AFTER THE PARTY

□ Take photos (ask permission
□ Thank people who came
□ Reach out to anyone who signed up
□ Talk to your helpers about next steps



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PLANNING YOUR EVENT

Timing

- Start planning 4–6 weeks out.
- Have 2 quick planning meet-ups (one early to set the plan, one closer to finalize).
- Day of: arrive 1–2 hours early to set up.

Organizing Help

Don’t try to do this solo - spread the jobs around:

- **Lead Host**: Picks the date, location, and keeps things moving.
- **Food Crew**: Decides grill vs. potluck and makes sure basics are covered.
- **Set-Up & Clean-Up Crew**: Tables, chairs, trash cans, signs.
- **Firewise Voice:** Preps the short “neighbor chat” and handouts.
- **Photo/Social Helper**: Takes a few pics and posts a thank-you afterward.



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Location Ideas

- **Backyard:**
  Cozy, easy for a smaller group.
- **Driveway or Cul-de-sac**:
  Central, visible, encourages walk-ups.
- **Local Park:**
  Tables are often already there. Less setup, more shade.
- **Other Creative Spots**:
  Community garden, church parking lot, or even a barn.

Anywhere neighbors feel comfortable gathering!

Set-Up Ideas [think about flow]



1. **Food Zone:**
   A couple of tables together for dishes, drinks & condiments.
2. **Hangout Zone:**
   Chairs in a circle or clusters so people can actually talk.
3. **Info Zone:**
   One table with your Firewise map, sign-up sheet & handouts.
4. **Kid Zone:**
   Chalk, bubbles, or a blanket with simple games.

Tip:
Don't overcomplicate it.
Four "stations" are plenty to make the space feel inviting & organized.

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DAY OF PLAN

Keep it easy & flexible - this is a guide, not a schedule.

BEFORE PEOPLE ARRIVE

□ Set up food area, tables, chairs, trash cans

□ Post signs or chalk arrows to welcome people

□ Set out Firewise map and sign-up sheet

□ Place handouts on a table (evac tips, go bag list, etc.)

□ Set out a few kid-friendly activities (chalk, bubbles, etc.)

Event Flow - Start anytime neighbors show up - no timeline.

1. WELCOME + INTRO (5 minutes)

- Use the script below to say hi and introduce the idea of Firewise
- Invite people to pin their house on the map
- Let folks know this is casual and come-as-you-are

2. EAT + MEET (open time)

- Serve food, keep music playing
- Visit tables, introduce neighbors to each other
- Have volunteers chat casually about fire safety, evacuation, etc.

3. MINI FIREWISE CHAT (2–3 minutes)

- Ask some “Icebreaker” questions
- Use the “Firewise Talk – Neighbor Style” handout
- Keep it short and friendly
- Invite folks to add their name to the interest list

4. WRAP-UP (as it winds down)

- Thank people for coming
- Let them know you’ll follow up if they signed up
- Ask if anyone wants to help plan something small next

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FIREWISE TALK -> NEIGHBOR STYLE

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WELCOME SCRIPT

“Hey everyone - thanks for coming out! We’re just here to have a good time, meet some neighbors, and talk a little about how we can make this place safer when it comes to wildfire. No big speeches, just food and friendly people. Grab something to eat, say hi to someone you don’t know, and check out the map or handouts when you’re ready. Thanks for being here - let’s hang out!”

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

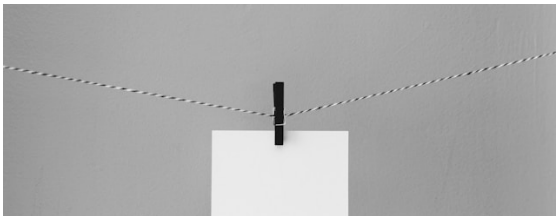
Post these around on signs, or use as prompts at tables.

For Everyone

- What would you grab if you had 5 minutes to evacuate?
- Do you know two ways out of your neighborhood?
- How would you hear about a fire coming your way?
- If you had to leave today, who would you check on first?
- Have you ever packed a go bag? What’s in it?
- Who has a chainsaw on this block? A truck? A generator?

Kid-Friendly & Family Fun

- If you could only bring ONE toy or game with you, what would it be?
- Which snack would you never leave behind?
- Who in your family is the fastest at getting ready to go?
- If your pet could pack their own bag, what would they put in it?
- What superhero would you want to help your neighborhood in a fire?
- If you had a walkie-talkie, what fun call sign (nickname) would you choose?



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JUST A QUICK CHAT TO GO WITH YOUR BURGER.

Hey there!
Hi everyone - I'm [Your Name], and I live right nearby. Thanks for coming to the BBQ! I just wanted to take a minute to tell you about something we could do together to help keep this neighborhood safer from wildfire.

It's called Firewise Firewise is just a way for neighbors to work as a team. We check in with each other, clear dry brush, and try to make sure fire trucks could actually get down the road if a fire came through. Little stuff, but it can make a big difference.

What about families? Firewise isn't just for the adults with chainsaws. Kids can help too - pulling small sticks, raking leaves, or reminding us to check gutters before fire season. Families working together is what makes this program real. When kids see parents and neighbors teaming up, they grow up knowing that looking out for each other is just what we do here.

Why should we care? This part of Nevada City is a fire-risk area. Firefighters have said they won't come down streets they can't get through safely. That could be us. But if we do a few things — together — we make this place easier to protect.

What does it take? Not much. Just a few people who want to talk to neighbors, maybe help organize a clean-up or learn what grants we can get. We're not forming a club or anything. Just trying to be ready.

If you're curious... Come pin your house on the map. If you want to learn more later, put your name on the sign-up sheet. No pressure — we'll just reach out and chat.

That's it! Thanks for listening. Grab some food, meet someone new, and let's enjoy this nice day together.

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MINI PRESENTATION MATERIALS

Use these to share simple info at your BBQ (no formal setup required).

1. Firewise 101 Flipbook or Poster

- A simple visual showing how neighbors can work together to reduce wildfire risk
- Covers defensible space, home hardening, and roadside clearing
- Ask for: *"Firewise 101 Visual Aid"*

2. Go-Bag Demo Checklist

- Printout showing basic items to pack for a quick evacuation
- Option: display a real go-bag for visual impact
- Ask for: *"Ready Set Go Bag Checklist"*

3. Handouts

- Ask for: *"Evac Prep and Red Flag Safety Handouts".* Examples include:
  - Evacuation planning steps & Evacuation Zone maps
  - Roadside vegetation tips
  - Ready, Set, Go! Go-Bag Checklist (from ReadyNevadaCounty.org)
  - Red Flag Warning handouts
  - Defensible Space and Roadside Clearing flyers

Where to Get Materials:

Nevada City Office of Emergency Services (OES)
317 Broad St, Nevada City, CA 95959 530-265-2496
www.nevadacityca.gov/nevadacityoes

Ask for printed outreach materials for a **Firewise community event or neighborhood BBQ**. Most are free; they can also send digital versions.

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PHOTOS & SOCIAL TIPS

Why Take Photos? Pictures help neighbors remember the fun and show funders, partners, and other neighborhoods that Firewise BBQs really work.

Tips for Good Event Photos

- **Get permission first** (verbal is fine; written if kids are clearly featured).
- Capture **action shots**: neighbors pinning their house on the map, kids drawing with chalk, someone explaining a go-bag, people laughing around the grill.
- Take a group photo near the end (doesn't need to be perfect - candid is better).
- Include any **sponsor signage or handouts** in a couple of shots.

Easy Social Media Captions

- "Neighbors + BBQ + Firewise = a safer block!"
- "Good food, good company, and a safer neighborhood. Thanks to everyone who joined our Firewise BBQ!"
- "Building community resilience, one burger at a time."
- "Who knew wildfire prep could be this fun?"

Where to Share

- Neighborhood Facebook group or Nextdoor.
- Firewise Community's page (if you have one).
- Send best photos (with caption) to FSNCC or Nevada City OES for county-wide sharing.

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FOLLOW-UP TOOLS

Neighborhood Firewise BBQ - Interest & Contact Sheet

Sign-Up Sheet Template

Name	Address / Street	Phone	Email	Notes (skills, equipment, interest)

Interest Form - "Wanna help start something here?"

Hand out a half-sheet or small card with a few easy check boxes. Example:
I'm interested in helping our neighborhood be Firewise! *(Check all that apply)*

□ I'd like to help organize a small clean-up.
□ I can spread the word to a few neighbors.
□ I have a chainsaw / truck / trailer to pitch in.
□ I want to learn how to get our neighborhood recognized as Firewise.
□ Just keep me in the loop for future events.

Name: _____Best way to reach me:
□ Text □ Email □ Phone
Turn this in before you leave, or snap a photo and send to [Neighborhood Contact].

Tips:

- **Place near the food or Firewise map so people naturally stop by.**
- **Snap a picture of the completed sheets in case paper gets lost.**

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BUDGET TIPS

Sample Budget: How to Host a Firewise BBQ Under $300
(Adjust for your neighborhood size)

Item	Cost Estimate	Notes
Grill fuel (propane/charcoal)	$30	Shared among hosts or borrowed
Main dish (burgers, hot dogs, veggie options)	$100	Buy in bulk, Costco/Sam's Club
Buns, condiments, sides	$60	Ask neighbors to potluck side dishes to cut cost
Paper goods (plates, cups, napkins)	$30	Compostable if possible
Drinks (water, lemonade, iced tea)	$40	Neighbors can BYOB
Flyers/printing	$15	Black & white door hangers are cheapest
Kid activities (chalk, bubbles, simple prizes)	$25	Dollar store or donated
TOTAL	$300	Or less with potluck contributions

TIPS TO SAVE & STRETCH BUDGET



- Make it a **potluck**: each family brings a side or dessert.
- Ask local grocery stores or hardware stores for **donations** (charcoal, gift cards, water).
- Share costs across 2–3 households so no one shoulders the full amount.
- Consider a **raffle prize donation** from a local business (gift card, firewood delivery, etc.).

Sample Donation Request Letter “Hello, we’re hosting a neighborhood Firewise BBQ to build community and learn simple ways to reduce wildfire risk. We’d love your support with a small donation (gift card, supplies, or prize item). In return, we’ll thank your business at the event and on social media. Together we’re making Nevada County safer!”

FIREWISE 101

How Neighbors Can Work Together to Stay Safer from Wildfire

1. CLEAR YOUR YARD (0–5 FEET FROM YOUR HOME). Keep this area clean and tidy - no dead leaves, pine needles, or flammable junk near your walls, porch, or roof.

- No firewood against the house
- Sweep porches and gutters
- Cut grass short

2. TRIM ALONG THE STREET. If fire trucks can't get through, they won't come. We can help by trimming back plants and trees near the road.

- Keep 10 feet of clearance on both sides
- Cut branches that hang low
- Move stuff that blocks the way

3. LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER. You don't have to do it all alone. Being Firewise means we help each other get ready.

- Share tools or haul piles together
- Check on neighbors during Red Flag Warnings
- Join a clean-up day

4. KNOW YOUR PLAN. Be ready to leave early - don't wait for the knock on the door.

- Pack a go-bag
- Know 2 ways out
- Sign up for alerts: **www.ReadyNevadaCounty.org**



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QUICK-START GUIDE TO FORM A FIREWISE GROUP

Step 1: Gather a Core Team

Usually 2–3 motivated neighbors is enough to start.

Pick one person to be the main contact (Firewise "lead").

Step 2: Connect with Local Support

Reach out to the Fire Safe Nevada County Coalition (FSNCC) for guidance.

Ask for sample documents, training, and resources.

Step 3: Define Your Neighborhood Boundary

Decide what streets or blocks make up your group.

Print or draw a simple map.

Step 4: Complete a Hazard Assessment

A volunteer or trained advisor walks the neighborhood and notes wildfire risks.

This helps set your first goals.

Step 5: Create a 3-Year Action Plan

Keep it simple: "annual clean-up," "trim roadside brush," "evacuation drills".

Step 6: Host a Community Event

A BBQ like this counts! You'll need at least one outreach/education event per year.

Step 7: Track Hours & Contributions

Every bit of work counts: raking, hauling, chainsaw time, even attending meetings.

Record neighbor time & donations toward Firewise status.

Step 8: Apply for Recognition

Submit paperwork through NFPA's Firewise USA program (with help from FSNCC).

Once approved, celebrate your new Firewise Community!

GET HELP!

Need help? Have questions?
These local websites can help you get started:

- **Fire Safe Nevada County Coalition**
  FireSafeCoalitionnc.org
- **Nevada City Office of Emergency Services**
  nevadacityca.gov/NevadaCityOES
- **Ready Nevada County**
  ReadyNevadaCounty.org
- **CAL FIRE: Get Ready to Go**
  fire.ca.gov/prepare/get-ready-to-go

Funding Made Possible

This toolkit is brought to you by the Nevada City Office of Emergency Services and in partnership with Neighbor-to-Neighbor a program of California Volunteers, Office of the Governor Program, and created by the Fire Safe Nevada County Coalition (*of Firewise communities*).

Learn more:
www.californiavolunteers.ca.gov/neighbor-to-neighbor

Neighbor to Neighbor