



City of Arts & Innovation

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Orangecrest Country First Neighborhood to Receive Firewise USA® Recognition

New status is the result of neighbors' efforts to create defensible space, reduce wildfire risk

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Orangecrest Country, a residential neighborhood that straddles both sides of Trautwein Road in Ward 4, is Riverside's first Firewise USA® community, which recognizes the neighborhoods efforts to reduce wildfire risk at their homes.

Sue Johnson, who organized the neighborhood to pursue the designation, said she and her neighbors were spurred into action by the Hawarden Fire in Riverside in July 2024 and the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles County in January 2025.

"The Hawarden Fire really got us thinking about it," Johnson said. "That showed it could happen here, and the LA fires demonstrated the devastation we could be looking at."

[Firewise USA®](#) is a program of the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®), a self-funded nonprofit organization that seeks to use information, knowledge, and passion to help save lives and reduce loss associated with fire. In addition to its thousands of members, NFPA has more than 10,000 volunteers that help develop and update fire prevention standards.

The group provides outreach and educational resources, as well as fact sheets, online trainings, and more. It works with Fire Departments, including the Riverside Fire Department, neighborhood organizations and other groups to decrease fire risk through increased education and advocacy.

"Firewise USA® is a great way for communities to learn how to decrease fire risk at their properties and increase their own personal safety," Fire Chief Steve McKinster said. "We look forward to partnering with Riverside residents to assist them in achieving this status and, more importantly, learning how to best protect your home from wildfire."

Orangecrest Country is the first community achieve the designation in Riverside. Firewise USA® communities already exist in Redlands, Chino Hills and Corona.

Orangecrest Country is made up of more than 1,000 homes, so it was important to create a committee so that tasks could be shared, Johnson said. The entire effort took about four months and focused on the importance of “home hardening,” ie making it more difficult for fire to damage your house.

For example, the group emphasized such things as the need to keep tree branches from hanging over homes, keeping combustible plants away from a home, trash away from fences and ensuring flying embers cannot enter an attic. The group also created a three-year plan for following up with additional action.

Johnson said the group received a remarkable level of assistance from Jayda Feld, Community Preparedness Instructor with the Riverside Fire Department.

“She was so helpful,” Johnson said. “I introduced her, and she took over. It was wonderful.”

Johnson emphasized that, while some homes may be more at risk by virtue of being close to a river bottom or an arroyo, all homes need this level of protection. She recommended that other neighborhood groups also seek the Firewise USA® designation.

“It’s never too late to get prepared, and there’s nothing wrong with being over-prepared,” Johnson said. “I feel a lot more prepared, and I’m glad I did it.”

More information can be found at:

[Firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org)

<https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa/firewise-usa-resources>

<https://www.nfpa.org/Education-and-Research/Wildfire/Firewise-USA#brochures>