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PIONEER VILLAGE EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Philomath, OR -- Because of its efforts to reduce the vulnerability of homes and landscapes to wildfire, Pioneer Village has earned Firewise Communities/USA® recognition from the National Firewise Communities Program.

"Firewise Communities/USA recognition acknowledges the hard work the residents of Pioneer Village have already done and provides direction and support as we set our course for the future," said Pioneer Village Homeowners Association Board President Jack Rundel.

Pioneer Village worked with Blake McKinley, Community Wildfire Forester with the Oregon Department of Forestry, to conduct a wildfire hazard assessment and develop a plan to address safety concerns. Residents then worked together to implement the plan.

"Pioneer Village should be commended for taking responsibility to address wildfire safety concerns and helping to make their community more survivable when a wildfire occurs," said McKinley. "Pioneer Village will be an example to other high-risk communities in the wildland urban interface where houses meet the forest."

Philomath Fire & Rescue Chief Tom Phelps and Benton County were both contributors to the Firewise effort.

Rundel said Pioneer Village has benefited greatly from local partnerships including Philomath Fire and Rescue, Benton County Community Development and the Department of Forestry.

"The Firewise recognition now allows us to tap into resources and connect with peer communities on a regional and national level," he noted.

Pioneer Village is the ninth community in Oregon to be recognized as Firewise Communities/USA, and the first in ODF's West Oregon District, which includes Benton, Polk, and Lincoln Counties. This community joins many others nationwide that have been recognized since the program's inception in 2002.

To receive Firewise Communities/USA recognition, Pioneer Village met a rigorous set of requirements. The community completed the following activities:

- Completed a local Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
- Conducted road right-of-way clearing projects to open up and widen the available road widths within the community.
- Created and distributed surveys to determine the Wildfire Hazard Rating and action items for the community.

- Worked with local fire and forestry agencies to remove flammable vegetation from around their homes and other neighborhood structures.
- Conducted numerous community meetings and informational events to explain and educate the community about the Firewise Communities plan and distribute Firewise information.

“Achieving Firewise recognition is not a quick or easy process. Pioneer Village has done an outstanding job of creating a local Firewise Task Force and implementing Firewise principles,” said Michele Steinberg, support manager of the Firewise Communities program. “By preparing homes, structures, and landscapes *before* a wildfire occurs, Pioneer Village has dramatically increased the chance that homes and structures will be protected when a wildfire occurs.”

Working through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), the Oregon Department of Forestry supports the Firewise Communities/USA recognition effort. The program is a nationwide initiative that recognizes communities for taking action to protect people and properties from the risk of fire in the wildland/urban interface. This program is of special interest to small communities and neighborhood associations that are willing to reduce vulnerability to wildfire by adopting and implementing programs tailored to their needs. The communities create the programs themselves with cooperative assistance from state forestry agencies and local fire staff.

Fire-prone communities can work with local professionals to earn Firewise Communities/USA status by meeting the following criteria:

- Enlist a wildland/urban interface specialist to complete a community assessment and create a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community.
- Sponsor a local Firewise Task Force Committee, Commission or Department, which maintains the Firewise Communities/USA program and tracks its progress or status.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA Day annually, dedicated to a local Firewise project.
- Invest a minimum of \$2 per capita annually in local Firewise projects. (Work by municipal employees or volunteers using municipal and other equipment can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose.)
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA that documents continuing compliance with the program.

Communities interested in earning recognition may visit www.firewise.org/usa for more information.

Firewise Communities/USA® Recognition Program is part of the National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169. For more information visit www.firewise.org.