Enabling Fire Chiefs to Make Their Organizations and Citizens Equal Players in Fire Adapted Communities
A Condensed Guide to Implementing

Ready, Set, Go!

Program Explanation and Your Role:

The Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) Program serves as a collaborative process – with an increasingly successful track record – that seeks to develop and improve the dialogue on wildland fire preparedness between fire departments and the residents they serve. Engaging and helping the fire service in this dialogue is important because national studies have shown that you, as firefighters, are uniquely respected in your communities and can project a trusted voice to the public preparedness appeal. You can also explain the role individuals can play in preparedness and early evacuation – if called for by their local officials – to increase firefighter safety during a wildland fire.

The program provides the guidance and tools for any organization – regardless of size or resource ability – to communicate with residents about what to expect in a wildland fire; how to adopt successful and existing defensible space guidance; and to raise situational awareness in the public during the early stages when there may not be enough resources to protect every home. To learn more about these specific tools, visit www.wildlandfireRSG.org.

The RSG! Program works in complimentary and collaborative fashion with other wildland fire public education programs at the national, state, and local levels to amplify their messages to individuals to better achieve the common endeavor we all share of fire adapted communities.

The RSG! Program tenants are:

- **Ready – Be ready.** Take personal responsibility and prepare long before the threat of a wildland fire so your home is ready in case of a fire. Create defensible space by clearing brush away from your home. Use fire-resistant landscaping and harden your home with fire-safe construction measures. Create your Personal Wildland Fire Action Plan:
  - Assemble emergency supplies and belongings in a safe place.
  - Plan escape routes and make sure all those residing in the home know the plan of action and practice it regularly.
- **Set – Situational awareness.** Pack your emergency items. Know how to receive and stay aware of the latest news and information on the fire from local media, your local fire department and public safety.
- **Go – Act early!** Follow your Personal Wildland Fire Action Plan. Doing so will not only support your safety, but will allow firefighters to best maneuver resources to combat the fire.
**Engaging in the Dialogue, Regardless of Organization Size**

They may be called brush fires, grass fires, field fires, railroad fires, outdoor fires, or forest fires, but no matter the name, the risk to residents and resources remains the same. Your organization may already have existing outreach efforts or you may be engaging with residents on this issue for the first time. Any leader considering how their organization can better connect with the residents they serve with wildland fire preparedness messaging can benefit from the RSG! Program and its implementation steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps to Consider in Your Department:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The RSG Champion’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scaling the Program to Your Organization’s Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Internal Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. External Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identifying and Accessing State and Local Assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Identifying and Accessing Federal Assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Planning for Special Needs Populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Keeping Up Momentum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 1: The RSG Champion’s**

As with any project an organization takes on, the champion’s primary role in the RSG! Program is to set the tone for the rest of the organization. Make it a priority. Appoint a Ready, Set, Go! coordinator to help oversee all of the organization’s outreach and internal communications. Appoint one or two people who have a passion for this issue and have their enthusiasm drive the project.

**Step 2: Scaling the Program to Your Organization’s Size**

Identify your service area’s risk to wildland fire and your organization’s ability to spread the message. This becomes your communication plan to best engage your residents with your organization members. The RSG! Program is not one-size-fits-all. Rather, each organization can tailor it to your available resources. You might already have an outreach system in place to teach residents about other fire prevention activities, and the RSG! Program can augment that educational process. Consider starting small – with just one neighborhood or area – and focus your awareness efforts going forward. In addition, the RSG! Program provides action guide booklets, outreach tools, templates to localize the message, and other resources free of charge. Organizations simply need to join the program.
**Step 3: Internal Communication**

An understanding of the wildland fire threat in your service area may already exist with your organization. Others, though, may need to create a culture within the organization that supports and understands WUI mitigation efforts. Make it a priority for your personnel to become familiar with the WUI threat in your area; the residents in your areas that are affected; and existing preparedness tools to mitigate the challenge. Your personnel are ambassadors in your community for fire safety. The RSG! Program Website, [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org), contains many educational tools on the resources page for organizations to better understand preparedness techniques; talking with the public; and wildland fire activity.

**Step 4: External Communication**

Identify the local events, neighborhood, and trusted voices in the community that can help you deliver the wildland fire preparedness message to help create a fire-adapted community. You will need to meet with them to convey the urgency of the challenge and how they can become partners with you in prevention. Possible stakeholders in the target audience and those who can provide assistance include: individual residents and Homeowner Associations; local fire departments; law enforcement; Fire Corps; CERT teams; local elected officials; Firewise or other preparedness plan coordinators; local media, Rotary Clubs and business bureaus; local philanthropy groups; churches and schools; insurance agents; and developers to name a few. To learn about smart practices for engagement and dialogue, visit [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org).

**Step 5: Identifying and Accessing State and Local Assets**

Your organization should establish positive working relationships with other local fire departments; local public safety agencies; state-level fire service organizations; and state-level forestry, interior and land management officials. Your goal should be to identify the staffing and equipment resources that would be available to your organization if your resources become overwhelmed and foster relationships before an event occurs. State-level groups may also be able to help you with funding and localizing the message.

**Step 6: Identifying and Accessing Federal Assets**

Your organization should establish positive working relationships with representatives of federal agencies to connect with those who share your goal of creating a fire-adapted community, can help with planning, and can provide resources if your organization becomes overwhelmed in wildland fire preparedness and response. Visit our ‘Partners’ Page under the ‘About’ tab at [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org) to learn more about our federal partners.
Step 7: Planning for Special Needs Populations

When talking to residents in your community, it is important to consider and gauge populations historically considered “vulnerable,” “at risk,” or “special needs.” Such residents in your community at risk in the event of a wildland fire may include those who have disabilities; who live in institutionalized settings; who are elderly; who are children; who are from diverse cultures; who have limited English proficiency or who are non-English speaking; or who do not have access to transportation. Understanding their needs will help your organization explain options to them and utilize them as partners in the preparedness effort. The RSG! Program website includes information and resources on functional needs populations.

Step 8: Keeping Up the Momentum

*Keeping up the energy of both organization personnel and community members will be critical.* If the champion continues to maintain enthusiasm about the RSG! Program and continues to make it a focus of the organization, personnel will follow suit. While the RSG! Program is a long-term project, engaging in dialogue with the residents you serve will ensure individuals make better decisions one person at a time. The RSG! Program website and resources provides member organizations with a platform to learn from each other, and allows access to the latest materials and guidance to help create Fire Adapted Communities.

Contact the Ready, Set, Go! Program

For more information about the Ready, Set, Go! Program, including questions about current work in your state, please visit [www.wildlandfireRSG.org](http://www.wildlandfireRSG.org). We thank you for joining the program and encourage you to take advantage of all the resources available.

The Ready, Set, Go! Program

International Association of Fire Chiefs

4025 Fair Ridge Drive, Fairfax, VA 22033

703-273-0911 / [RSG@iafc.org](mailto:RSG@iafc.org)

IAFC's Wildland Fire Programs are funded in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this Institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). To file a complaint alleging discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call toll free voice (866) 632-9992, TDD (800) 877-8339, or voice relay (866) 377-8642. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.