



# FEMA

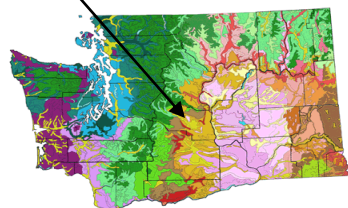
# Best practices

Disaster Mitigation Working in Washington

DR-4243-WA

## Adapting to Wildfire in Kittitas County

### Kittitas County



**Kittitas County, Wash.** - People in this central Washington county have suffered through many serious wildland fires including the devastating 2012 Taylor Bridge Fire, which scorched 23,252 acres and destroyed 63 homes. They are now building knowledge, skills, tools and behaviors that improve their community's safety and resilience. That's the essence of becoming a Fire Adapted Community.

Their work involves creating more resilient forest and wildland landscapes. They're also building better fire-response capabilities, creating buffers between fuels and neighborhoods, introducing public-education initiatives, promoting "firewise" property improvements, encouraging business-continuity planning and embracing appropriate regulations.

Kittitas County is fortunate to have strong leadership and capable staffs in local governments and nonprofits. A good example is the partnership between the fire marshal's office and the Kittitas County Conservation District, whose team was able to secure funding of critical risk-reduction projects through the Federal Emergency



Management Agency's Pre-Disaster Mitigation grants. They are also planning new projects and applying for additional assistance through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The county became eligible for this assistance after it developed its Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was approved in 2012.

The county worked with a large number of agencies and organizations to develop its 2009 Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The plan helps set goals, strategies and priorities for action, stressing the safety of residents and firefighters. It includes an inventory of firefighting assets along with detailed communication and evacuation plans.

Another major step toward safety and community resilience was the 2006 adoption of the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code. These rules have been applied to unincorporated areas

within the county and involve – among other protocols – using noncombustible or fire-resistant materials in new construction, fire-suppression sprinkler systems and maintaining defensible spaces by keeping combustible materials and vegetation away from buildings.

Kittitas County, like many other communities, is facing challenges associated with rapid development in its wildland-urban-interface areas. While folks are aware that total freedom from wildfire risk is not realistic, they are striving to make progress toward healthier forests and wildlands, enhanced safety for everyone, and reduction of future damage to infrastructure and property.

### More information:

**Kittitas WUI Code:**  
[www.co.kittitas.wa.us/firemarshal/wildland-urban-interface.aspx](http://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/firemarshal/wildland-urban-interface.aspx)

**Kittitas Conservation District:**  
[www.kccd.net/](http://www.kccd.net/)