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Public Service Announcements Ask Arizonans to “Have the Backs” of Firefighters
Home, Businesses Owners Encouraged to Mitigate the Risk of Wildfire to Life, Property

PHOENIX—Arizona is a “wildfire state,” which is another way of saying our state has a history of destructive wildfires. In the past five years alone, large wildfires have burned over 850,000 acres and caused \$100s of millions in damages.

While there is no way of knowing where or when the next big wildfire will spark, there are scientifically-proven ways to protect lives and property in the whole community.

“It’s hard to exaggerate the threat of wildfire in Arizona or the importance of preparing for them,” said Wendy Smith-Reeve, Deputy Director for the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA). “Wildfires can’t be predicted or always prevented, but home and business owners can take steps to mitigate the threat of wildfires to themselves, firefighters and their property.”

Wildfire mitigation is the focus of a new public service announcement (PSA) campaign from DEMA titled *Have Their Backs*. The statewide campaign will run April through June and includes radio and television spots in English and Spanish, and billboards in communities that have experienced large wildfires like Sierra Vista, Heber-Overgaard and Prescott.

The radio and television spots and billboard ask Arizonans to “have the backs” of wildland firefighters and to begin to “live Firewise®” by making simple home improvements to protect your investment.

“Wildland firefighters risk their health and safety every time they go out on the line,” said Smith-Reeve. “One way people can honor firefighters’ public service is to live Firewise®.”

Historically, wildfire season in Arizona picks up in May. Last year, the Slide Fire burned over 21,200 acres in the area of Oak Creek Canyon. While May is four short weeks away there is still enough time to prepare for wildfire by clearing debris from gutters and creating defensible space around your property.

The Firewise® Communities Program, www.firewise.org, is a national fire prevention and mitigation campaign that “teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourage neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent losses.” The National Fire Protection Association manages the Firewise Communities program, which is administered in Arizona by the State Forestry Division.

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Visit the Arizona Emergency Information Network at www.EIN.az.gov for official emergency updates, preparedness and hazard information, and multimedia resources.