

Starting a Council: Make the Most of the Meeting

Welcome

Greet the newly formed Council by welcoming members to the first meeting. Most of them probably have very busy schedules. They may be attending this initial meeting to determine if their membership is a good use of their time. Express gratitude for their attendance and convey a vision that this Fire Safe Council can make a difference in the community.

Introductions

Ask everyone in the room to introduce themselves and their organizational affiliation. Revealing the group's diversity will allow everyone to see how wildfire affects the entire community.

Nevada's Fire Problem

The first order of business should be to explain Nevada's fire problem. A fire safety expert, such as the fire chief, can help the group understand the role of fire in the ecosystem and how it affects your community. Ask the fire official to also discuss the Nevada Fire Plan.

The Fire Safe Council Concept

To explain the Fire Safe Council concept, consider having a member of the State wide organization speak to the group about the state wide accomplishments and the importance of a Fire Safe Chapter in your community.

Goals and Objectives

The facilitator should ask Council members to list major goals and objectives. Turn the meeting into a brainstorming session by asking each participant to answer the question: "What do I want this group to accomplish?" This will help identify fire safety problems or objectives important to the group. Try posting the ideas on a board and include them in the meeting minutes.

High Fire Hazard Areas

A map will help the Council identify geographic areas of concern and high fire hazard areas in the community. The Council should refer to the map to help prioritize potential fire safe projects. The Council should not only consider existing neighborhoods, but also look at business districts and areas of planned residential and commercial development that are near forest or wildland. The Council should also identify the community's assets at risk -- all the people, places, natural resources and other assets that need protection from wildfire.

Fire Safe Projects

Identify projects the Council can accomplish and assign oversight responsibility to members. The person or group will provide progress reports to the Council at future meetings or ask for further assistance, if necessary. The project should be put into a time frame with a target date of completion.

Appointment of Executive Officers

Typically, executive officers include a chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer and secretary. However, many councils have designated only a chair and co-chair. Your council should determine the leadership it feels most comfortable with.

Organizing Committee

The appointment of a small group of people to prepare a application proposal is an efficient use of time and generally helps move the meeting along to a successful conclusion. If people have strong opinions or feelings about any particular part of the application they should be given the opportunity to voice them. Including someone from the state council to assist in the organizing committee deliberations is a good idea.

Open Forum

Give Council members the opportunity to make announcements or raise issues that were not addressed in another area of the agenda.

Next Meeting

Set a date. Do not postpone setting a date and then contact all the participants later. Since everyone is at one location at the current meeting, this is the best time to announce a date. You may want to secure the location and some potential dates for the next meeting beforehand to make scheduling easier. Over time, consider setting a meeting schedule for the year or assigning a constant, specific meeting date. (e.g. the third Tuesday of each month).