



Big Mountain Fire District Fire Wise and Fire Safe

November 2023

2023 BMFD Firewise Annual Report to our Community

It is once again the time of year that your community Firewise Board reflects on all that we have accomplished this year and begin our planning for next year. Once again, this year we have seen that our Big Mountain Community has been listening, learning, and is committed to working together to truly make a difference preparing for and reducing the risk of wildfires! Thank you!!

We began our year focused on education with monthly community update emails from April through July. If you missed any of these updates, they are all posted on our community website www.bigmountaincommunity.com along with other important wildfire safety and prevention checklists and brochures. Thank you to Suzanne Burrow for writing these monthly updates. Suzanne also put together the wildfire season information sheet which can be posted at rental properties for renters and the wildfire information sheet for construction sites on the Mountain (posted on the community website).

The Big Mountain Community website is an important communication tool for wildfire education and wildfire evacuation notices. If you have registered as a member on the website and included your cell phone number, you will receive a text as outlined in BMFD's Wildfire Evacuation Levels 1, 2, and 3 posted on the website for evacuation notices. If you have not registered for website notifications, you can do so today by going to the website above; click **REGISTER** in the top right corner and enter your contact information. If you have questions, contact jenannsato@gmail.com. Thank you to Jen Sato and Jeffra Clough for keeping this website up to date with valuable information for our community.

Thank You to our property owners who cleared brush and yard debris from their properties this spring. Our volunteer group of 14 loaded and unloaded 14 flatbed trailer loads and 7 pickup loads of brush/debris stacked by the road by property owners. Our community volunteers included Paul Silverman, Coordinator; David and Suzanne Burrow; BMFD Fire Chief Ben DeVall; Kim Jensen; Brett and Sue Oemichen; Doug and Julie Brinkman; Justin, Ronda, and Treson Steinbach; Noel Huettich; and Robert Gjullin. Decreasing fuel around your home helps to protect your property, your neighbor's property, and our community from a wildfire.



Our fire danger risk signs were posted at the bottom of Big Mountain Road and at top of Big Mountain Road near the entrance to the Base Lodge by the BMFD Firefighters. These signs are a great way to inform property owners and guests of the current wildfire danger. We also had meetings to discuss emergency egress in the event of a wildfire with County, State, and US Forest Service fire personnel, County and State highway representatives and Flathead Electric. This work will continue into 2024.

Whitefish Mountain Resort plays an important role in keeping our community safe from wildfires. Josh Witt, Risk Control Manager for WMR and BMFD Firewise Board member and BMFD Fire Chief Ben DeVall contributed multiple hours in Emergency Action Plan meetings to plan and educate employees in wildfire prevention and emergency shelter in place procedures. Other activities include defensible

space for Mountain infrastructure; fabricating nozzle holders and placement to use the snowmaking reservoir pond system as supplemental fire protection; improving defensible space around buildings and critical infrastructure; building maintenance including sealing penetrations of greater than 1/8th inch, clearing gutters; improving vehicle pool readiness; creating new “No Smoking” signs; increasing deployment sites; placing Firewise literature at the Base Lodge for visitors and guests, and more.

The Big Mountain Firewise Community Picnic Fair was held on Thursday, July 20th at the BMFD Fire Hall. Thank you to the planning committee and volunteers who spent many hours coordinating this fun event, including Diana Tague, Chair; Ben DeVall; Karl and Carol Moody; Suzanne and David Burrow; Brett and Sue Oemichen; Tom and Jen Sato; Angel Dominquez; Jeffra Clough; Kathy McAughan; Sheila Johnston; Lloyd and Patrice Hartsfield; Josh Witt; Tony Patterson; Steve Cosby; Paul and Connie Silverman; and Rhona Meislik. Thank you also to our picnic sponsors: WMR; Anapurna HOA; Big Mountain HOA; Big Mountain Sub 2 HOA; Edelweiss HOA; Elk Highlands HOA; Glacier Village HOA; Lotus HOA; Moose Run HOA; and Slopeside HOA.

The weather was perfect again this year for our picnic. What a great way to visit with neighbors and meet new community members; tour our Fire Engines and Ambulance; discuss our BMFD Evacuation procedures for a wildfire at the Firewise Display; learn about the BMFD Firefighters Association; pick up wildfire prevention and preparation literature; spray a fire hose; identify fire resistant plants; discuss property insurance coverage for wildfires; visit with Search and Rescue and Fire Extinguisher personnel; and take a picture with Smokey Bear. Ben DeVall, BMFD Fire Chief, led a discussion with fire personnel from Flathead County OES, Montana DNRC, US Forest Service; FireSafe Flathead; and Search and Rescue. They shared valuable wildfire information with attendees and answered many questions. Thank you to everyone who attended and all who worked to make this such successful community event.

In the effort to keep our community as safe as possible from a wildfire, BMFD Firewise, through the efforts of Paul Silverman, coordinated with a professional tree service to remove hazardous fuels at the property owner’s expense this fall. This consisted of removing both standing dead trees and dead fall already on the ground. As of October 31st, 48 dead trees plus deadfall have been removed from properties in our District. Additional trees are scheduled for removal in November, weather depending.

As we start our planning for next year, please send us your ideas and thoughts; and if you are interested in becoming a part of BMFD Firewise or helping with Firewise initiatives, send us a note to bigmountainfire@hotmail.com

According to FireSafe Montana, “Based on recent history and experience, Montana possesses all of the characteristics necessary to support large, intense, and uncontrollable wildfires. The solution to Montana’s wildfire situation is to create communities that can survive wildfires.”

Your home ignition prevention preparations not only help to protect your property, but also your neighbor’s property and the Big Mountain community. Thank You!!!

Your BMFD Firewise Board:

Ben Devall, Fire Chief
Sue Oemichen, Resident Leader
Paul Silverman, BMFD Board Rep
Josh Witt, WMR Rep

Diana Tague, Community Rep
Marylou Patterson, Community Rep
Suzanne Burrow, Community Rep
Woody Hust, Community Rep

