

## The Firewood Community Safety Initiative <sup>1</sup>

Firewood is an affordable, low-carbon, renewable fuel for many rural households. However, under some circumstances, wood stoves can be a safety and health hazard. The goal of the Alliance for Green Heat's *new Firewood Community Safety Initiative* (FCSI) is to reduce fire and health risks by promoting safe, wood-heating best practices. These practices include: using moisture meters and providing seasoned, dry firewood, knowing how to inspect and maintain wood stoves, keep chimneys clean and promoting smoke/carbon monoxide detectors and metal ash buckets. All firewood banks who join the initiative will receive free technical assistance and a safety tool kit.

Each toolkit will contain: smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, indoor air quality monitors that detect particulate matter (PM2.5) concentrations, woodstove thermometers, and ash cans to make it easier to clean a wood stove, and colorful, easy-to-read educational materials.

**Become a Safe Community Firewood Leader** Firewood banks who join the initiative can achieve "Safe Community Firewood Leader" status by taking the following three steps:

**1. Pledge** to provide only seasoned firewood (20% moisture content or less) to your firewood recipients.

**2. Partner** with other community organizations. Reach out to your local service providers and work together to promote your firewood bank's services. (e.g. low-income energy assistance programs, local fire departments, food pantries, local wood stove retailers, or town and county governments)

**3. Educate** Distribute Burn Wise educational materials or hold an educational wood heating program (see examples below).



All firewood banks that complete these 3 steps will be recognized on the AGH website and receive a flag that can be displayed at their wood lot or headquarters.

**For more information on the Firewood Community Safety Initiative see <https://firewoodbanks.org/safety> or contact: Hannah Stinson, Energy Equity Manager at Alliance for Green Heat at 208-241-8452 and [hannah@forgreenheat.org](mailto:hannah@forgreenheat.org)**

<sup>1</sup> The Alliance for Green Heat's Firewood Community Safety Initiative is made possible through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wood Innovation Grant. USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

## Examples of Educational Programs:

- Supply and Install Smoke and CO Detectors** - Smoke and (CO) detectors are a must in any wood-heated home. Organize a detector installation day for your firewood recipients! In addition to providing critical fire warnings, these detectors protect people from carbon monoxide's invisible threat. By promoting and installing these detectors, your firewood bank can help firewood recipients reduce their risk and stay safe.
- Host Educational Safety Event with a Wood Stove Specialist** - Invite a guest speaker to your firewood bank to discuss common wood stove issues and solutions with firewood users. Your guest speaker might be a local firefighter, represent a wood stove manufacturer or work at a wood stove retailer, or be a certified wood stove and/or chimney expert. Invite wood recipients to an informal introduction of firewood bank staff and volunteers. Help make it easy for the wood heating community to get their questions addressed, make necessary fixes, and even replace harmful stoves. Fostering a good relationship with your wood recipients is the first step in understanding what they are going through and how to help them.
- Organize a Tour of Your Firewood Bank** - Organize a tour to promote wood heating and showcase your firewood bank's services and accomplishments. Invite potential recipients, volunteers, sister community organizations (tribal, church, or social service providers etc.), and local or state elected officials.
- Recycle Wood Waste and Get Free Firewood** - Invite loggers, arborists or tree pruners in your community to bring waste wood to your firewood bank. Salvaging firewood (especially hardwoods!) that would normally go to waste is a free source of wood for your bank and will save businesses landfill tipping fees. A win-win!
- Advocate and Educate Patrons on Federal Heating and Weatherization Assistance** - Programs (LIHEAP & WAP) Many patrons of your firewood bank may qualify for federal assistance programs (Low-Income Heating Assistance Programs (LIHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Programs (WAP) if their incomes are less than 200% of the federal poverty threshold. Gaining access to federal assistance can mean free home energy audits, wood stove inspections, and wood stove maintenance. In addition, firewood banks are eligible to become a LIHEAP vendor and be compensated by LIHEAP for each load of wood delivered to qualified wood-burning households. Contact your local energy assistance program to learn more about how LIHEAP and WAP may benefit your recipients and your firewood bank.
- Provide Indoor Air Quality Sensors** - Provide easy-to-use indoor air quality sensors to firewood users to help them monitor for air pollution inside their homes.