

## **Mayor Phil Goode Letter for April 1, 2024**

### **Preparing for Wildland Fire Season in Prescott**

This time of year, the Prescott area enters wildland fire season as the winter moisture subsides and the weather turns drier and warmer. The fire season for Prescott and all of Northern Arizona generally falls between April 1 and July 1. Weather, and other factors can extend or shorten a fire season. Prescott Fire Department, working with partner agencies, is doing more than ever to help our community be prepared and resilient. However, as a community within a wildland-urban interface, we can always do more to be prepared and work together to minimize the risks.

Every spring, firefighters from across the nation converge here in Prescott to attend the annual Arizona Wildfire and Incident Management Academy, hosted by the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. That recent event brought a record-breaking 1,100 participants, so you might have noticed their presence in town, especially if you run a restaurant or hotel. Those folks were training here to learn the best practices for dealing with this threat that annually endangers our community and much of the western United States. Their business is response, dealing with the threat as it happens. We should be doing our part, as a City and its citizens, to give them the best chance at success.

In 2023, the Prescott Fire Department onboarded a Wildfire Risk Manager who has been tasked with creating a strategy for minimizing future risks to life and property. Conrad Jackson, a long-time member of the Prescott Fire Department, and an educator has been named in this role. Beyond developing long-term strategies, part of his duties include outreach and the education of our residents. Part of his educational work will be introducing the concept of Fire Adapted Communities to our region.

The Fire Adapted Community concept takes a core concept of Firewise, and expands it to cover everyone's role in protecting our community. It also expands the idea of being prepared to include your actions during a fire as well as after it passes. It is a more holistic approach, which makes sense given where we live. Wildland fires are going to happen as they always have, so we need to have the right approach in living with its presence.

The core of all the preparedness though is still Firewise. For those folks new to the area and possibly unfamiliar, being Firewise relates to creating a defensible space around your home to decrease an approaching wildfire's intensity and help give some working room for firefighters who may need to work around your home battling the blaze. It largely boils down to thinning out the brush and trees around our homes, removing their lowest branches, and eliminating problem materials like leaf litter, woodpiles, propane tanks, and lumber from against our homes. Every little bit we do to remove hazardous material is a step in the right direction.

For years the City has worked with other agencies including Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority (CAFMA), Prescott National Forest (PNF), and Yavapai Firewise to educate the public and mitigate the risk of a wildfire disaster. As fire season gets underway, there is still time for citizens to

help these folks be successful in their efforts. I urge citizens to be educated, informed, and prepared. We cannot afford to do otherwise.

To learn more about best practices in creating that defensible space, there is literature available online, on the City of Prescott Website [Prescott-AZ.gov](http://Prescott-AZ.gov), and through [YavapaiFirewise.org](http://YavapaiFirewise.org).