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## Program aims for fire safety in community

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**PIGEON FORGE** — The Pigeon Forge Fire Department is hoping to start a movement to make the entire city safer from fires with an Aug. 22 forum on the Firewise program.

Firewise is a creation of the National Fire Protection Association that works to educate property owners on how to make structures safer from brush fires and wildfires through improved construction, maintenance, and landscaping around the buildings.

Chief Tony Watson has

been a long-time proponent of the program.

"This program cannot be successful unless we find these folks out in the community, both residents and business owners, that embrace it," Watson said.

PFFD will host a program at the LeConte Events Center from 6 to 8 p.m. Aug. 22, and he's hoping to get residents and business owners to attend.

The program will feature speakers from the fire department and the

Please see **SAFETY** | 3

## SAFETY

CONTINUED FROM 1

Tennessee Division of Forestry, who, Watson said. Beverages and snacks will be provided.

The Firewise program looks to make buildings safer from fires by controlling the landscaping around them and the materials used in construction on the outside, as well as maintenance, Lt. Kevin Nunn said.

While they hope to encourage Firewise construction measures in the future, they know the focus will be on how people can improve the safety of their homes through landscaping and maintenance.

One of the major thrusts of Firewise is keeping fuel away from structures.

"You're looking to

have no flammable vegetation such as mulch or bushes or trees from zero to five feet (from the structure)," Nunn said.

That can help keep flames from reaching a structure even when they're burning the surrounding surface.

"Everything that's right up against the house needs to be pulled back," Nunn said.

They will go over those and other measures, and they'll be looking for volunteers in different sections of the city who will work with the fire department to make their homes or businesses Firewise.

From there, the department hopes to use those buildings as examples for the com-

munity of how they can make their property safer from fires.

After last year's wildfires that took 14 lives and damaged more than 2,500 homes in Sevier County — including a few in Pigeon Forge — they believe it's more important than ever to educate the community on how to make their homes safer from fire.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Watson said. "This is very important to our community as a whole."

For more information on the Firewise program, visit [firewise.org](http://firewise.org).

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