

# **2012 Firewise Recertification Document**

**December 20, 2012**

**Prepared by**

**Sun City Texas Firewise Group**





# My Firewise

## Community Information

Community ID: 00640 Community: Sun City Texas Community Association  
City/Town: Georgetown State: TX  
Original Application Date: 12/15/2009 Total Residents: 9810

## Contact Information - Edit - Renew

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Name Mr. Jim Romine

Title Executive Director

Company

Address 2 Texas Drive Georgetown, TX 78633

Phone / Fax 512-948-7703

Email Address jim.romine@sctexas.org

## Annual Investments

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Year	Amount	Number of Residents
2009	\$448,042	9810
2010	\$4,645,925	11232
2011	\$4,167,709	10972
2012	\$4,995,490	12013
Total Investments	\$14,257,166	

## Firewise Event Information - Add Firewise Event

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Date	Description
10/09/2012	Town Hall meeting for community with presentations and displays. The program was also available via television to our community residents.
10/09/2012	Town Hall for community with presentations and displays. The event was televised to our entire community as well.
10/20/2011	Reviewed Firewise Program and explained how wildfires could affect Sun City, 427 plus TV audience. Similar event held in January 2011.
10/20/2011	Reviewed Firewise Program and explained how wildfires could affect Sun City, 427 plus TV audience. Similar event held in January 2011.
06/09/2010	The June 9 Town Hall meeting in the Sun City Social Center Ballroom was attended by approximately 100 people plus those viewing on the community cable channel. Current activities and plans were reviewed.
08/13/2009	August 13, 2009, 1 pm. Presentation to the SCTX Board of Directors explaining how Firewise Will benefit SCTXCA and requesting to apply for certification.

## **Sun City Texas by Del Webb**

### **Sun City Texas Community Association**

Sun City Texas, a Pulte/Del Webb development, is located within the Georgetown, Texas city limits, 5.5 miles from Interstate 35 on Williams Drive. Sun City Texas is an urban community with wild land vegetation (juniper, hardwood, and native grasses) in the parks, open spaces and adjacent properties. When built out, Sun City Texas will have 7,500 homes on 4,100 acres. As of November 30, 2012, there are 6,323 homes with a Sun City population of 12,013 residents with an estimated population of over 13,000 at build out. Sun City is presently the largest Home Owners Association as a Certified Firewise Community in Texas.

The Sun City Texas Community Association (CA) is responsible for the management of all non-residential property. CA documents define a set of four maintenance levels. Included in these levels are federally defined protection areas for karst formations (including underground caves) and for endangered species. The CA also owns and maintains three golf courses.

There are two creeks, Berry and Cowan, that have hardwood and cedar trees in the flood plain. The presence of Ashe Juniper (cedar) trees, an invasive native, poses a fire hazard from the trees themselves as well as being accumulation points for debris that occurs periods of creek floods. In 2010, a very large flooding event deposited a significant amount of debris in the flooded areas. This debris added a significant amount of fuel that would be a part of any wildfire that occurs. The community also has two heavy concentrations of Ashe Juniper that pose a significant wildfire threat should a wildfire happen. Applying Firewise principals to selectively remove Ashe junipers and clean up flood debris will reduce the wildfire and flooding hazard.

Sun City has 740 Landscaped Maintained Homes (LMH) managed by the CA. The lawns, beds, and trees are maintained under a contract with the CA. Working with the CA Staff and the Landscaped Maintained Homes Committee, the Firewise Home Ignition Zone principles are applied to LMH properties.

All other residential properties depend on individual property owners for the implementation of the Home Ignition Zone principles. Homeowner education is the key to providing information to community residents concerning the dangers from wildfires and to encourage the management of defensible spaces around their homes.

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group is a subcommittee of the Sun City Texas Emergency Management Committee. Specific activities are assigned to the following program groups: Education Program, Home Ignition Zone Assessment Program, Community Wildfire Protection and Re-certification Process Program, and Firewise Clearing Program.

The Firewise group hosts an annual community wide Firewise Town Hall. Presentations and participation at community events such as special town halls, quarterly New Homeowners orientation, community events, and clubs and neighborhood meetings provide face-to-face contact. The monthly CA magazine "The Sun Rays", the weekly CA-Communicator e-mails, and special e-mail blasts are used to communicate additional information about Firewise and about high fire danger situations that occur in our continuing periods of severe drought.

The Firewise group has established and trained a core team of approximately 50 Home Ignition Zone evaluators to conduct Home Ignition Zone assessments. These individuals not only conduct assessments as requested by residents but also become neighborhood sources for Firewise information.

The Firewise group works with the CA, the Property and Grounds Committee, Wildlife Management Committee, and the Golf Committee to reduce the potential for wildfires in the CA owned common areas. The volunteer Firewise Clearing Team meets weekly (weather permitting). Working with the CA Landscaping staff, they remove small Ashe junipers and vines in common areas that could become ladder fuels in a wildfire.

## **2012 Accomplishments**

Table 1 contains the volunteer time and Community Association contributions for the 2012 calendar year.

The severe drought beginning in 2011 and large wildfires in the Austin-Bastrop area set the stage for the 2012 activities. The 2012 CA budget added one additional full-time Landscape staff member to support the Firewise activity. The budget also included \$250,000 to be used for equipment and for outside contractors used to perform one-time cleanups of Ashe juniper and major debris in the community waterways. The contractor work cleared 70 acres.

The purchase of a tracked Bobcat with a forestry mulcher and trailer permitted staff to tackle common areas, shredding Ashe junipers in place - quickly reducing the fire hazards in designated locations. The forestry mulcher created three fuel breaks in the two areas of major Ashe juniper concentration. One area is being developed as a part of a community walking trail. Residents will be able to view the interplay of the environment, (flora and fauna) while implementing necessary Firewise practices. The crew cleared approximately 72 acres.

The Sun City Texas Firewise Certification continues to allow the CA to receive a reduced property insurance premium on CA held assets.

Supported by the CA staff, resident volunteers, The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew, assembled weekly to remove small Ashe junipers and ladder fuel vines in CA common areas. Projects were identified by Firewise leadership who have many years of experience in land management and the fire service. The Crew cleared approximately 14 acres.

**Table 1.** The 2012 hours and costs contributed by volunteers, homeowners, and CA Staff.

<u>item</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>units</u>	<u>total value</u>
Volunteers			
Firewise volunteers	2,203	hours	\$ 18,103
Home Ignition Zone Assessments	474	hours	10,125
Volunteer Clearing Crew	1,322	hours	28,238
Subtotal-Volunteer Contribution	2,999	hours	\$ 85,419
Landscape Maintained Homes (740 houses) <sup>1</sup>	\$922,822	dollars	\$ 461,411
Community Association			
Creek Clearing Crew <sup>1</sup>		dollars	50,260
Contractor Work <sup>1</sup>		dollars	80,616
Staff Work		dollars	67,149
Subtotal-Community Association Contribution			\$ 198,025
Resident contribution (prorated)			
Paid to vendor	2,790	paid	1,416,731
Own care	2,790	hours	2,833,914
Subtotal-Resident Contribution			\$ 4,250,645
<u>Total</u>			<u>\$ 4,995,490</u>

<sup>1</sup>Values are half of amount spent as these represent wildfire and flood remediation.

A multi-pronged approach evaluated the fire and flood risks. The primary goal was to achieve a balance between the hazards and the effects on vegetation and wildlife habitat. The group also consulted with the CA staff in prioritizing projects for outside contracted activities for the removal of flood debris where there was fire danger.

Firewise leadership worked with the CA staff to investigate and make recommendations concerning resident concerns about the fire danger present in fuel break areas between residences (also defined in Sun City Texas as Level 3 maintenance) and native maintained common areas (Sun City Texas Level 4).

The Firewise Group and its subcommittees provided 2,677 volunteer hours to manage the program. In addition, volunteers conducted 316 Home Ignition Zone Assessments providing 474 hours. The Firewise volunteer time represents over 78 equivalent 40-hour weeks. The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew provided 1,322 hours adding the equivalent of 33 40-hour weeks.

The two Sun City Texas Firewise publications continue to be distributed in the New Homeowners packets given to each new resident. The publications are also available at all Firewise presentations.

Three articles about Firewise were published the monthly "Sun Rays" resident magazine. Additional information items about Firewise and fire dangers were produced for the weekly CA Communicator e-mails. The Firewise USA publication "How to Have a

Firewise Home” was distributed to all residents.

"It's the Embers", an educational Town Hall program was held on October 9. Firewise representatives and the City of Georgetown, Texas outlined wildfire behaviors, steps residents can do to lessen the danger to their home, and plans for the coming year. Information tables provided information about the Sun City Texas Firewise program and areas for volunteering and for requesting Home Ignition Zone assessments. Representatives from the Sun City Texas CA, Property & Grounds Committee, and Wildlife Management Committee plus local government organizations that might be involved in a wildfire event also provided information.

Firewise information were given to various Sun City neighborhoods and clubs during the year. The Firewise Information table was manned for the four New Homeowners Orientation meetings, the annual Emergency Management Town Hall, and the Wildlife Committee Town Hall. The Firewise group was represented at the annual Sun City Texas Volunteer Summit.

A Firewise representative attended the NFPA "Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone" workshop given in Austin, Texas in September.

Nineteen new volunteers were trained in three sessions for the Firewise Home Ignition Zone Assessment Program using classroom training and a field exercise. The sessions were also used as refreshers for previously trained volunteers. A total of 49 trained Home Ignition Zone Assessment Evaluators are currently active.

A training session was conducted for landscape service providers to help them understand Firewise landscaping and apply the concepts in the maintenance services offered residents. Eight companies and two CA contractors attended.

## **2013 Goals**

- ! Develop re-certification materials for 2013.
- ! Distribute Firewise information to residents
- ! Conduct the annual Firewise Town Hall.
- ! Continue training for the Home Ignition Zone Assessment Program.
- ! Conduct a landscape service contractor training session .
- ! Provide Firewise information at neighborhood, clubs, and community wide gatherings
- ! Work with the CA Property and Grounds and Wildlife Committees integrating Firewise practices into the management of all CA common areas.
- ! Work with the CA Golf Committee and the Golf Courses managers to integrate Firewise practices in golf course management.
- ! Participate in the Community Managers International Association 2013 workshop being held in April, 2013



**Photo 1.** The audience at the October 9, 2012, Firewise Town Hall.



**Photo 2.** Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Cathy Shirley (l) greets Williamson County Commissioner Valerie Covey (c) at the Firewise Town Hall.



**Photo 3.** Some of the displays from Sun City groups at the Firewise Town Hall.



**Photo 4.** The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew prepares to remove small Ashe juniper trees from an open area.



**Photo 4.** The Firewise Display used at various functions to educate residents.



**Photo 6.** The house models from Firewise USA used to illustrate what a Firewise house is like.





**Photo 7.** In 2007, this area blocked a 100-year flood event flooding several nearby yards. The smaller Ashe juniper growth is less than 12 years old.



**Photo 8.** The area was cleared of all small Ashe juniper in early 2008.



**Photo 9.** The same area in 2012 after four growing seasons of recovery. The grass cover in the area has recovered without seeding.

## Thanks to the Troops Thursday, May 10

Submitted by Anne Watson Henry

Be sure your calendar is marked for Thursday, May 10 to participate in our "Thanks to the Troops" Day here in Sun City. The Ft. Hood troops will be arriving off of Highway 195 at 11 a.m. and will be escorted to White Wing Golf Course.

Many of our Sun City residents line Sun City Boulevard all the way to White Wing Golf Course waving their flags to greet our soldiers. As they do not start playing golf until 1 p.m., there is time to come to the golf course to meet these young men and women, shake their hands and say thank you.

You may also wish to join your neighbors out on the course to meet the soldiers. On many of the tee boxes, neighborhoods and organizations will set up goodies and soft drinks for them to munch on while they are on the course.

Don't be left out. Come and join the fun. Let's give them a huge "THANK YOU!"



## Resident Directors' Open Session Meeting Wednesday, May 16, 3 p.m., CCG

Submitted by Glynn Hatley, Board Secretary

The Resident Directors of the Sun City Texas Community Association Board will have their third Open Session on Wednesday, May 16 at 3 p.m. in the Georgetown Room at the Cowan Creek Amenity Center. This meeting is to allow for a two-way dialog between the Resident Directors and the residents at large, and will mainly focus on matters listed on the May Board workshop agenda. These Open Session meetings have been well attended in the past; all are welcome.

## School's Out! Golf Carts + Grandkids - Just Say NO!



Many grandchildren will be in our community for summer break, and the temptation will be there to allow them to drive the golf cart. **NOTE:** It is against the law to allow them to do so, not to mention extremely dangerous. Please, **DO NOT** let them get behind the wheel; you might be ticketed.



Sun City Texas  
**FireWise Group**  
Sun City Texas Community Association

## Wildfire Prevention

Submitted by Ron Thompson, Firewise Chair

**W**hen the wildfires struck Bastrop last year, we witnessed a community come together to help each other in the time of disaster. Here in Sun City, we have the Emergency Management Committee, which would help coordinate efforts should we ever have a disaster.

But I don't want to write about the response to disaster. I want to emphasize prevention. One of the main goals of the Firewise Group is the prevention of a wildfire affecting Sun City. While we, as a group, can get the Community Association and Pulte to help with cedar removal for fuel breaks and emergency access, and brush clean-up in the creeks and drainage areas, we need more. We need our "community" to come together, just like Bastrop, **BEFORE** a disaster strikes.

One of the things that can cause a wildfire to spread is blowing embers. These embers can be blown for a significant distance and can start a fire if they land on something that will ignite.

Quite often the embers will travel together in what are called "brand storms." They become like snow and will collect in drifts, amplifying their heat. Fires can cross interstates, lakes or even rivers. Jumping a couple of streets in Sun City would be easy. In fact, the small brush fire we had at the corner of Cool Springs Way and McKinney Falls last spring jumped two streets and caught grass on fire.

There is a zone around your house that is known as the Home Ignition Zone. Studies have shown that people who have removed flammable material in this zone have an excellent chance of surviving a wildfire in their area.

This is where the Firewise Group comes in.

We have been trained by the Texas Forestry Service to identify the Home Ignition Zone and to offer suggestions on what can be done to help prevent a house from becoming involved. We have also been authorized to train others in our community how to assess the Home Ignition Zones. We currently have 57 residents who are trained.

The Firewise Group offers a **FREE** Home Ignition Zone Assessment to anyone who requests one. Once an appointment time is set, evaluators will walk around the exterior of the property, working in pairs, looking for any potential fire hazards. Once the information is gathered, the evaluators will discuss their findings with the homeowner. A copy of the assessment is also provided to the homeowner. These reports are shared only between the evaluators and the homeowner. Evaluators do not provide copies to Modifications Committee, the CA or any other committee or resident. What is done with the information is up to the individual homeowner. We understand that everyone's circumstances are different; sometimes suggested remedies are not affordable or the homeowner doesn't see the need.

The Firewise group has completed just over 400 Home Ignition Zone Assessments. There are more than 6,000 rooftops in Sun City. This amounts to a little more than 6 percent Home Ignition Zone Assessment participation in our community. We would like this number to be in the 90 percent area. If we were able to do that, we would never become another Bastrop, Spicewood or Steiner Ranch. We need our community to come together **BEFORE** a disaster strikes in the area.

Go to the Sun City Web Portal at [www.sctxca.org](http://www.sctxca.org) and click on the Site Index link and then choose Firewise from the alphabetical listing. Choose Request HIZ Assessment from the left pane. Or ask for the Request HIZ Assessment form at the Monitor's Desk in the Social Center at Texas Drive or the Cowan Creek Amenities Center.

## Sun City, Wildfires, and Firewise

Submitted by the Sun City Texas Firewise Group



Wildfires are a reality in Texas. Have there ever been any wildfires in Sun City? The Firewise Group has documented four small wildfires since 2008. The largest fire

was about 12 acres near Neighborhoods 4 & 6, with another small one near Neighborhoods 11B & 8 in 2008. More recently, there was the wildfire along Cool Spring Way by Neighborhood 42 that actually jumped two streets. The last wildfire was a yard fire that caused damage to a house in Neighborhood 2 in January 2009.

The real concern is not the wildfire itself, but the burning embers that can be carried from the fire by the smoke column. The embers can be pieces the size of a quarter to very fine embers. The smoke column can carry the material up to a mile or more depending on the wind speed and direction. The embers will be falling before the wildfire reaches an area. If the embers fall on material that can easily ignite, a fire could start.

### Level 3 Areas

The first 30 feet behind homes along the common areas or green belts are mowed 2-3 times each year to maintain a "fuel break." A fuel break is an area where the flammable fuel is reduced so a fire will be slowed or possibly stopped. This area also provides an area that reduces the amount of heat that will reach the home.

When mowed, the vegetation is mowed to about 6 inches above the soil to maintain the native vegetation in a good growth habit. The usual times for mowing are after the wildflowers have seeded in the spring and after the vegetation has become dormant in the fall. A third mowing is used only if the vegetation is tall and dry and presents a fire hazard.

Ash juniper (also called cedar or mountain cedar) in the Level 3 Areas have been dying from the drought and will be removed when requested. This is a large job and will be done within the abilities of the CA staff.

### Sun City Homes

Homeowners can do a lot to protect their homes. Regular maintenance of the flammable materials around your house that embers can ignite include dry grass in the lawn, accumulated leaves and twigs under plants, debris in gutters, and even door-mats that can burn.

Home maintenance is the important part. Removing leaves and plant debris regularly, cleaning gutters after trees drop leaves, trimming shrubs and plants to provide at least a 6-inch clearance from the wall, and planting only fire resistant plants within 3-5 feet of the house are among the critical tasks. We offer a Home Ignition Zone Assessment to help understand where maintenance can improve the Firewise status of your property.

### What is Firewise?

Firewise is a nationwide program designed to promote protecting people, property, and natural resources "before a wildfire occurs." The Sun City Firewise Group is a participant in the national program. We are under the Emergency Management Committee and work with the CA staff, the Property and Grounds Committee and others for the common areas.

The Firewise Group provides education for the residents. We

use printed materials, Town Hall Meetings, neighborhood events, the Home Ignition Zone Assessment Program, and other functions. We have a volunteer program for individuals to become a part of the program at the community, neighborhood or block level.

To request a Home Ignition Zone Assessment, go to the Monitor's Desk in the Social Center or Cowan Creek Amenity Center and complete the form there. Or go to the Sun City website ([www.sctxca.org](http://www.sctxca.org)), select "Site Index," then "Firewise" under the "F" listing. On the Firewise page, select "Request a Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment," and complete the form.

### Let's Communicate! Continued from page 7

- Receive support and constructive input from owners and non-owner residents.
- Personal privacy at home and during leisure time in the community.
- Take advantage of educational opportunities (e.g., publications, training workshops) that are directly related to their responsibilities, and as approved by the association.

### Community Leaders Have the Responsibility To:

- Fulfill their fiduciary duties to the community and exercise discretion in a manner they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the community.
- Balance the needs and obligations of the community as a whole with those of individual homeowners and residents.
- Understand the association's governing documents and become educated with respect to applicable state and local laws, and to manage the community association accordingly.
- Establish committees or use other methods to obtain input from owners and non-owner residents.
- Conduct open, fair and well-publicized elections.
- Encourage input from residents on issues affecting them personally and the community as a whole.
- Encourage events that foster neighborliness and a sense of community.
- Conduct business in a transparent manner when feasible and appropriate.
- Allow homeowners access to appropriate community records, when requested.
- Devise appropriate and reasonable arrangements, when needed and as feasible, to facilitate the ability of individual homeowners to meet their financial obligations to the community.
- Provide a process that residents can use to appeal decisions affecting their non-routine financial responsibilities or property rights—where permitted by law and the association's governing documents.
- Initiate foreclosure proceedings only as a measure of last resort.
- Make covenants, conditions and restrictions as understandable as possible, adding clarifying "lay" language or supplementary materials when drafting or revising the documents.
- Provide complete and timely disclosure of personal and financial conflicts of interest related to the actions of community leaders, e.g., officers, the Board and committees. (Community Associations may want to develop a code of ethics.)

## Firewise Town Hall and National Fire Prevention Week

Submitted by Dan Dodson, the EMC Firewise Education Coordinator



October 7-13 is recognized as National Fire Prevention Week. It is observed across the U.S. with various activities to remind us about the danger of fire and about making plans for what to do if we were to be involved in a fire situation.

Here in Sun City Texas, we should be prepared for fire in our home and for wildfire in our area.

### Town Hall

The Firewise Team will host a Town Hall on Wednesday, October 3, in the Social Center Ballroom. The session will begin at 9:30 a.m. with presentations by the Firewise team and the Georgetown Fire Department. Topics to be presented include information concerning fire behavior, our Sun City sources of fire danger, our Firewise successes, and the future of the Sun City Texas Firewise program.

Also attending are representatives from the Texas Forest Service. Prior to the presentation, information booths will be available to give residents data about various activities relating to the Firewise program, its interactions with other Sun City Texas committees and Chartered Clubs, and general information about fire prevention. Invited groups include the Emergency Management Committee Education Group, Citizens on Patrol, the Amateur Radio Society, the Property and Grounds Committee, the Wildlife Management Committee, and the Georgetown Fire Department. Come early and learn from these groups.

### Home Ignition Zone Assessment

The Sun City Texas Firewise team's mission is to educate our residents about the dangers of wildfire. The team works with homeowners via the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment to evaluate the dangers from wildfire and its possible spread to an individual's home. They provide the homeowner with recommendations of changes that, if implemented, can reduce the fire hazard. The HIZ Assessment is free and can be requested through the Sun City Texas website, [www.sctxca.org](http://www.sctxca.org), via the Site Index. Select "Firewise" then "Request a Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment." Complete the request and submit. A Firewise team member will contact you to schedule and conduct the assessment. You can also request the assessment via a paper request that can be obtained from either the Texas Drive or Cowan Creek Monitor's Desk.

### Fire Prevention Week

Our Sun City Texas population is statistically more likely to be affected by fires than the general population. We must take the necessary steps to reduce the possibility that we will be one of those statistics.

Consider the following:

- Should fire strike your home, how would you escape?
- What if your primary exit is involved in fire, do you have an alternate escape route?

- Where would you go after exiting the burning structure? The theme of the 2012 Fire Prevention Week sponsored by the nonprofit National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) is "Have Two Ways Out!"

Developing a plan for what to do and practicing the plan could save your life. Identify a primary and secondary exit from each room in your home. A secondary exit might be a window. Can you open and exit from the window? What is on the outside? Is there shrubbery that will prevent your exit?

If the smoke alarm sounds, "GET OUT AND STAY OUT." If the room is filling with smoke, "GET LOW AND GO." Smoke and dangerous gases rise toward the ceiling. Air near the floor is less hazardous. Do not try to contact the fire department from inside. Exit, then call 911 from outside of your home.

Once exited, have a meeting place where everyone will go. The common meeting place makes it easier to verify that everyone has left the building. In Sun City, a good location is your mail box. Never go back inside for people or pets. If people or pets are not accounted for, just wait for the arriving fire personnel and communicate the information to them. Fire personnel have protective equipment that permits them to conduct search and rescue activities in most situations.

### Fire Safety Tips

- Test or have someone test your smoke alarm system once a month. Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old. If you have a hearing impairment, get special equipment that will provide warning.
- Never leave cooking unattended. Wear tight-fitting clothes or short sleeves when cooking. Keep anything that can catch fire—oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, or towels—away from the stove top.
- If your clothing catches fire, "STOP, DROP, and ROLL." Fire spreads rapidly, so it's important not to run or even walk if your clothes have caught fire.
- If you have overnight visitors (especially children), review your fire escape plan with them.

For additional information, visit [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) or [www.nfpa.org/education](http://www.nfpa.org/education).

### Halloween Firewise Tips:

- Dried flowers, cornstalks and crepe paper decorations are highly flammable. Keep these items away from any open flames or heat sources.
- It is safest to use a flashlight or battery-operated candles in a jack-o-lantern.
- Remember to keep exits clear of decorations, so nothing blocks escape routes.

Source: National Fire Protection Association