

# Behaviorally informed intervention materials for “Increasing requests for wildfire risk assessments”



The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) sent one of three different versions of a behaviorally-informed letter to property owners to learn whether different messages about wildfire risks may motivate property owners to take action. Property owners with structures in moderate- or high-wildfire hazard areas in two Montana counties were randomly assigned to either one of the three letter groups, or to not receive any letter.

Sending letters increased requests for risk assessments, but differences between the letter versions were not statistically significant.

The materials below provide the content of three versions of the letters sent to property owners, describe the different risk messages included in each, and describe the best practices adopted in these designs for effective communications. The web-based form that the Montana DNRC created to collect requests is also included.

The letters were designed with four principles in mind: ***make it personal***, ***keep it simple***, ***make it easy***, and ***make it timely***. (More information on designing effective communications can be found [here](#).) The way these principles were applied to the letters is described below:

1

## Make it personal

Highlight wildfire risk for their property and how it affects their community.

Indicate how taking action can help their community.

2

## Keep it simple

Include essential information about the program to raise awareness.

Provide simple step-by-step instructions to submit a request.

3

## Make it easy

Provide a short web address to make it easy to type into a browser.

Include the property address they can type into the online form.

4

## Make it timely

Highlight the importance of taking action now, while providing ample time to respond.

This project was a collaboration between the USDA Forest Service, the Office of Evaluation Sciences at GSA, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and the University of Montana Human Dimensions Lab.

For more information on this intervention or to start a conversation, **please contact [oes@gsa.gov](mailto:oes@gsa.gov)**.

[Mailed on county letterhead]

Dear [Name of Person],

Your property is at risk of being affected by wildfire.

**[Address of Property]**

You are eligible for a **free** site visit by a local fire professional. He or she will assess your property and provide recommendations for reducing the risk that your property will burn in the event of a wildfire.

**Step 1: Visit [website]**

**Step 2: Fill out your contact information**

**Step 3: Click "Submit Request"**

After you submit your request, a local fire professional will contact you to schedule a site visit.

Please request your free site visit **within two weeks of receiving this letter.** Your visit will be scheduled in the order that the request is received.

Sincerely,

[Name of sender]

Include essential information to raise awareness.

Provide a short web address to make it easy to type into a browser.

Provide simple step-by-step instructions to submit a request.

Highlight the importance of taking action in a timely fashion, while giving ample time to respond.

# Letter with program information and personal-risk message



[Mailed on county letterhead]

Dear [Name of Person],

Compared to other properties in [county], your property listed below is within an area that has a **significantly higher risk of being affected by wildfire**. Fire embers can travel up to 4 miles and ignite a structure.

[Address of Property]

You are eligible for a **free** site visit by a local fire professional. He or she will assess your property and provide recommendations for reducing the risk that your property will burn in the event of a wildfire.

You can increase your property's protection against wildfire impacts.

**Step 1:** Visit [website]

**Step 2:** Fill out your contact information

**Step 3:** Click "Submit Request"

After you submit your request, a local fire professional will contact you to schedule a site visit.

Please request your free site visit **within two weeks of receiving this letter**. Your visit will be scheduled in the order that the request is received.

**By taking action now**, you can increase your property's protection against wildfire.

Sincerely,

[Name of sender]

Make it personal by highlighting **risk to the recipient's own property**.

Include essential information to raise awareness.

Indicate that taking action can help.

Provide a short web address to make it easy to type into a browser.

Provide simple step-by-step instructions to submit a request.

Highlight the importance of taking action in a timely fashion, while giving ample time to respond.

# Letter with program information and community-risk message



[Mailed on county letterhead]

Dear [Name of Person],

Compared to other properties in [county], your property listed below is within an area that has a significantly higher chance of being affected by wildfire. If your property ignites, **it could put your community at risk** by spreading fire to nearby properties or putting firefighters at risk.

[Address of Property]

You are eligible for a **free site visit** by a local fire professional. He or she will assess your property and provide recommendations for reducing the risk that your property will burn in the event of a wildfire.

You can increase your property's protection against wildfire impacts.

**Step 1:** Visit [website]

**Step 2:** Fill out your contact information

**Step 3:** Click "Submit Request"

After you submit your request, a local fire professional will contact you to schedule a site visit.

Please request your free site visit **within two weeks of receiving this letter.** Your visit will be scheduled in the order that the request is received.

**By taking action now,** you can increase your community's protection against wildfire.

Sincerely,

[Name of sender]

Make it personal by highlighting **risk to the community.**

Annotation Here.

Include essential information to raise awareness.

Indicate that taking action can help.

Provide a short web address to make it easy to type into a browser.

Provide simple step-by-step instructions to submit a request.

Highlight the importance of taking action in a timely fashion, while giving ample time to respond.

# Form on the Montana DNRC website for submitting a request for a wildfire risk assessment



MONTANA.GOV  
OFFICIAL STATE WEBSITE

SERVICES AGENCIES LOGIN SEARCH MONTANA.GOV

Home Divisions Grants and Loans Licenses and Permits Public Information Land Board Flood and Fire Contact DNRC

**Fire Protection**

- Equipment Development
- Fire Business
- Fire Assessment Program
- Grants
- Prevention and Preparedness
  - Reduce Your Wildfire Risk
  - Request a Site Visit**
  - Wildfire Risk Portal
- Safety
- Suppression
- Training

**Forestry Assistance**

- Forestry Division Office
- Forestry Pioneers

## Request a Site Visit



To request a free site visit by a local fire professional please fill out the required fields below.

**Name**

**Street Address Where You'd Like The Assessment**   
If you received a letter, enter the address EXACTLY as it appears. Example: 222 HOWARD ST HELENA MT 59889

**City**

**State**

**Zip Code**

**Preferred Contact Information**   
Phone number or email address.

Please provide any additional information or corrections for the address where you'd like the site assessment conducted.

Once your request is submitted, a local fire professional will contact you to schedule a site visit.

Private information will not be shared. Information will be used for research purposes.

**Divisions**  
Board of Oil & Gas  
Conservation and Resource Development  
Director's Office  
Forestry  
Reserved Water Rights Compact Commission  
Trust Lands Management  
Water Resources

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DNRC's Mission  
Administrative Rules  
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