



JULIE O'BERG
FIRE CHIEF

City of Spokane Community Wildfire Protection Plan — 2024 Update

District Overview

The City of Spokane includes diverse service areas:

- **Commercial/Industrial:** Heavy, medium, and light zones
- **Residential:** Mixed urban and suburban housing, including the downtown core and Browne's Addition
- **Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI):** Expanding suburban growth into wildland areas
- **Key Institutions:** Growing medical and academic sector

The Spokane Fire Department (SFD) is a professional, fully paid organization with **375.63 employees** (350 uniformed, 25.63 civilian). The Department operates **16 fire stations**, covering **69.46 square miles** and serving a population of **229,447**. Services include fire suppression, EMS, hazardous materials response, technical rescue, fire prevention, and mutual aid to surrounding districts.

Key Concerns

1. Population Growth & WUI Expansion

Since the 2014 CWPP, Spokane has grown by over **30,000 residents**, with more than **58,000 homes** now in the WUI or intermix zones. Another **10,000 homes** are projected in the next 5–10 years. This growth challenges fire response due to **infrastructure lag** and **increased emergency calls**.

2. High-Risk Land Parcels

Many properties within SFD's jurisdiction are considered **high-risk WUI**, ranging from fragmented residential lots to large public tracts:

- **The Bluff** (700 acres)
- **Palisades Park and adjacent lands** (1,000 acres)
- **Beacon Hill** (1,000 acres)

3. Outdoor Burning Restrictions

Most outdoor burning is banned within city limits. Exceptions include **small recreational fires** (under 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height) for cooking or ceremonial purposes on private property.

Mitigation and Outreach Efforts

- The City owns **11,500 acres** of land; **4,200 acres** of this is **unimproved forest** needing treatment.
- In **2021**, Spokane adopted the **2018 Wildland Urban Interface Code (WUIC)**.
- A **full-time Wildland Resource Planner** was hired in **2022**, focusing on:
 - Fuel reduction



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- Public education on **Home Ignition Zones**
- City-wide wildfire outreach initiatives

The **Community Risk Reduction (CRR) team**, led by social work professionals, delivers **individualized, person-centered education** based on national standards (NFPA, FEMA, WA DNR), covering:

- Wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning
- Creation of defensible space
- Use of "To-Go" kits
- Community engagement via councils and local media

Grant Support

In **2022**, SFD received a **\$1.5 million Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)**, matched with \$375,000 in contributions from:

- **Avista Utilities:** \$125,000 over 5 years
- **Conservation Futures:** up to \$50,000
- **City of Spokane:** \$200,000 (offset by in-kind match from WA DNR)

Recent outcomes include:

- **730 acres** treated (2023–2024): thinning, pruning, and slash disposal
- **609 acres** planned for treatment (2024–2025)

Critical Infrastructure in WUI Areas

Numerous vital facilities lie within WUI zones, including:

- Wastewater treatment plants
- Water pumping stations and towers
- Community college campuses
- Over a dozen public schools
- High-voltage transmission corridors

Strategic Partnerships

SFD collaborates with a wide range of partners:

1. **Spokane County Wildfire Mitigation Coalition (SCWMC)**



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- Formed in 2024
 - Hosts monthly multi-agency coordination meetings
 - Supports hundreds of acres in collaborative fuel reduction
2. **Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR)**
- Works on cross-boundary fuel treatments
 - Provides **inmate crews**, **post-release crews**, and **wildland fire crews** for labor
3. **City Parks Department**
- Allows SFD to treat unimproved city-owned parklands
 - Enhances fuel reduction efforts on thousands of acres
4. **Avista Utilities & BNSF Railway**
- Joint fuel mitigation under/around powerlines and along high-risk railways
5. **Department of Ecology (DoE) & Washington Conservation Corps (WCC)**
- Ecologically sensitive thinning in riparian areas
 - Hand crews working under the CWDG grant
6. **Riverside State Park**
- Cross-agency planning for more effective land treatment on over **10,000 acres** of parkland