

FireWise of Southwest Colorado

News Release

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Railroad Receives Wildfire Mitigation Award

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards committee has announced the 2018 Wildfire Mitigation Award winners. Established in 2014, the awards are the highest commendation for innovation and leadership displayed by individuals and organizations committed to wildfire mitigation.

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards are sponsored by the [National Association of State Foresters](#) (NASF), the [International Association of Fire Chiefs](#) (IAFC), the [National Fire Protection Association](#) (NFPA), and the [USDA Forest Service](#) (USFS). FireWise of Southwest Colorado (FireWise) is pleased to announce that the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is one of the nine national winners.

Recognizing the comprehensive challenge posed by wildfires, these awards applaud the outstanding dedication to wildfire mitigation across a broad spectrum of activities and among a variety of individuals and organizations. By honoring their achievements, the award sponsors seek to increase public recognition and awareness of the value of wildfire mitigation efforts.

"The 2018 Wildfire Mitigation awardees are valued partners of the nation's state foresters and the agencies they lead, serving as key members in the nationwide effort to ensure safer and more rapid response to wildfire year-round," said George Geissler, Oklahoma State Forester and the president of the National Association of State Foresters. "I commend the awardees for their wildfire preparedness efforts which contribute to saving lives, protecting thousands of homes, and strengthening our communities."

"Wildland fire is more destructive and costly than ever before," said Chief Thomas Jenkins, IAFC president and chairman of the Board. "That's why on

behalf of the IAFC I'm especially proud to congratulate this year's National Wildfire Mitigation Award winners for their outstanding leadership and contributions to wildland fire risk reduction in their communities."

FireWise of Southwest Colorado nominated the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad for their multi-faceted approach to reducing wildfire risk in our community. Over the past three years, the railroad hired the Southwest Conservation Corps to reduce fuels along 160 acres of the railroad right-of-way. In addition, they contributed to a fuels reduction project along County Road 200, which is used to access four small communities and the train station at Rockwood. Since 2002, the year of the 70,000 acre Missionary Ridge Fire when the train was shut down for a number of weeks, the railroad has undertaken many wildfire precautions, including training their employees to monitor for fires, hauling water to suppress fire starts, and having a helicopter flying the route during the highest fire danger times in June and July.

Other examples of the railroad's efforts to help with the community's approach to wildfire preparedness include bringing their helicopter to a Firewise Day at Falls Creek Ranch, and their unique Christmas Tree Train, where passengers can disembark at the Cascade Wye and cut a Christmas tree, usually a white fir, which helps to thin the dense forest in the area.

"We feel the railroad's efforts truly exemplify how everyone has a role to play in creating fire adapted communities," said FireWise Executive Director Ashley Downing. "We are impressed by their unique approaches and the many partners they work with in their efforts."

Awards will be presented at the IAFC [Wildland-Urban Interface Conference \(WUI\)](#) in Reno, Nevada on February 28, 2018 and FireWise will do a local award ceremony at their Fire Council meeting on March 20. For a complete list of this year's winners and more information, please visit: www.stateforesters.org/mitigation.

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