

# Opinion: Why Nevadans do nothing about wildfire threat

By Ed Smith

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, in collaboration with Nevada's firefighting organizations, recently hosted the Nevada Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Summit. The summit's purpose was to discuss ways to reduce the wildfire threat to Nevada's wildfire-prone communities. This year's summit theme addressed the concept of creating fire adapted communities, or FACs.

A FAC is a community that can survive wildfire with little or no assistance from firefighters. This is possible because of the way the homes are built, the manner in which vegetation is managed and the knowledge possessed by its residents. To accomplish this, community members must be proactive. Unfortunately, many Nevadans living in high-fire-hazard areas fail to take action before the wildfire occurs.

Why? What prevents them from taking the steps necessary to protect their families, homes and possessions? At the summit, we asked approximately 80 community leaders and firefighting agency representatives from 30 high-fire-hazard communities in Nevada those questions. Presented below are some of the popular responses.

Cost and time: The perception that reducing the wildfire threat (e.g., creating defensible space, replacing untreated wood roofs, etc.) would be too costly, in terms of money and time, was identified as a major obstacle to taking action. This is also a question of priorities. Some property owners living in high fire-hazard areas have discretionary income and leisure time. They choose to spend this extra money and time on things they consider to be more desirable than creating a

fire-safe environment.

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