

How to organize a

Community Chipper Day



FIRE SCIENCE GOV
Research Supporting Sound Decisions

What is a chipper day?

A chipper day typically involves residents removing vegetation around their home and having the removed material chipped to reduce the risk of wildfire to their home and community. Coordinating vegetation removal between residents and local groups or organizations helps to maximize the impact of this work to enhance community wildfire safety.

Who can organize a chipper day?

1. Local governments
2. Fire departments
3. HOAs
4. Community organizations
5. Firewise communities

Different Ways to Run a Chipper Day

Central Drop-Off Site

- Community members gather their removed material and transport it to a designated site where it will be chipped. This method centralizes operations and allows for efficient processing of debris, but participation may be limited to those who with trailers or large vehicles to transport vegetation to the site.

Streetside Chipping Service

- Community members place their cleared vegetation curbside. On a designated day, a mobile chipper travels through the area, chipping the debris directly on-site. Depending on the organizer's plan, the resulting wood chips can either be left on-site for residents to collect and use, or hauled away for disposal

Volunteer-Assisted Vegetation Removal

- Volunteers are organized to help clear vegetation from registered properties. A chipper then processes the material either on the same day, following the volunteer group, or on a scheduled follow-up day. This approach combines vegetation removal with community engagement and support for those needing assistance.

Checklist for organizing a chipper day



Planning and Preparation

- ☐ Choose a model for the chipper day (central drop-off, streetside service, or volunteer-assisted) that aligns with community needs and capacity
- ☐ Choose an event date(s) and set community boundaries (e.g. limited to one neighborhood, a single HOA, or whole community) for the event
- ☐ Select a chipping contractor and agree on chipping rates
- ☐ Arrange for chip disposal
 - Decide whether to leave chips on-site or if hauling chips off properties, decide where chipped material will be dumped
- ☐ If using volunteers, ensure safety gear is available (e.g. gloves, goggles, ear protections) and train volunteers in safe equipment use
 - Training could occur at a pre-event meeting, the day of the event, through a webinar, etc.



Outreach and Registration

- ☐ Establish a registration process for participating homeowners and a closing date for registration several days before the chipping event
 - Know your chipping capacity - the average chipper may be able to work through 8-14 houses in a day depending on staffing, chipper capacity, and the amount of vegetation removed from each property
- ☐ Publicize the event through outlets such as printed flyers, Facebook, local news, and email contact lists to recruit residents to participate
- ☐ Provide residents with the necessary details about the event
 - This includes a date when all material must be staged by for chipping; information about what material may be chipped, including maximum size as every chipper can only handle a certain diameter for material; and instructions on where and how to stack woody material



Day of the Event

- ☐ Establish invoicing and payment procedures with your chipping contractor, if not already agreed upon
- ☐ Provide your chipping contractor with a well-organized list of addresses of participating homeowners and the contact information of event organizers
 - A map with a suggested route may also be beneficial
- ☐ If using the volunteer model, split volunteers into groups with a team leader. Visit one or two properties as a whole group to standardize approach to removing vegetation
- ☐ Highlight the benefits of removing vegetation from around homes, including wildfire risk reduction
 - Encourage local media coverage to promote education about wildfire risk reduction efforts in the community
 - Leave homeowners with educational materials, including home hazard assessment worksheets and/or guides

Things to consider

Funding

Explore different sources of funding or ways to offset costs including state microgrants, donations, homeowner cost-share, utilizing HOA dues, sponsorships, or donated time from organizations with volunteer hour requirements

Demand

If more homeowners are interested in chipping services than the event can accommodate, consider ways to prioritize properties. This can include prioritizing residents least financially or physically able to complete the work, houses where wildfire risk is highest, or where contiguous homes are registered to create greater benefit to the neighborhood

Education

Emphasize if chipped material is to be left onsite, chips should be kept at least five feet away from structures to ensure vegetation removal contributes to wildfire risk reduction

Travel

A truck will be towing a chipper and is limited to paved, graveled, or hard surfaced roads with adequate area for turning around

Continuity

Consider mechanisms or actions that can be put in place to encourage repetition of this work annually or seasonally



Example Agenda for a Volunteer-Assisted Chipper Day

A chipper day is more than just a debris-clearing event—it's an opportunity to foster community-wide engagement in wildfire risk reduction and forest health. By involving volunteers, you can create ambassadors who will promote fire protection and stewardship within their community, building a shared sense of responsibility.

It's also a perfect occasion to check in with residents about their participation in mitigation efforts, such as creating defensible space and home hardening. If

community engagement in these areas is low, a chipper day can serve as a starting point to build awareness, form relationships, and inspire action.

COMMUNITY HOMES OF PATAGONIA / THE ARIZONA WILDFIRE INITIATIVE / SOUTHWEST FIRE SCIENCE CONSORTIUM

CHIPPER DAY Event Schedule

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2024

8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

**8:30
AM**

WELCOME

VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANIZERS WILL MEET AT THE PATAGONIA WELCOME CENTER GAZEBO BY THE TRAIN ON THE EAST SIDE OF DOC MOCK PARK

- 1) Introductions and review Plan for the Day
- 2) Waivers signed
- 3) Teams assembled

EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION

- Pole saws
- Loppers
- Handsaws
- Work gloves
- Protective eyewear
- Ear protection
- Hardhats

**9:00
AM**

WORK BEGINS

Team East & Team West

**11:00
AM**

CHECK-IN

LIGHT SNACKS AT GOPHER FIELD

Determine how many more homes need to be visited

REGISTERED HOMES:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.