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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preparedness is the Key

Leavenworth, Washington – The catastrophic fire events in North Central Washington over the last few weeks have destroyed entire towns and shaken communities across the state. While firefighters are still battling the blazes, and fire continues to threaten homes and communities, the Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition takes this opportunity to remind residents to prepare themselves for evacuation and their properties for wildfire.

“Fires are a natural occurrence in North Central Washington. We can improve the defensibility of our homes, increase the safety of ourselves and first responders, and increase the efficiency of evacuations,” says Annie Schmidt, Director of the Chumstick Coalition. “It is not too late to prepare and homeowners can take action now that will make a difference.”

The greatest risk of homes catching fire during a fire event is from the advancing embers or “fire brands” that reach your property long before an actual flame front. “To reduce the risk that homes are ignited by embers, we strongly recommend that homeowners clean up around their homes and create defensible space.” says Kelly O'Brien, Chief of Chelan County Fire District #3.

Prepare your property – defensible space saves homes:

- Create 30 feet of defensible space around your home (www.Firewise.org)
- Clean roofs (remove branches & leaves), gutters (clear pine needles) and decks (move furniture & toys)
- Reduce brush, limb trees and mow grasses
- Move wood piles at least 30 feet away from structures
- Replace vent screens with 1/8” or smaller metal mesh screens

Prepare to evacuate – at a moment’s notice:

- List and gather your “Five P’s” – People, Pets, Pills, Papers, and Pictures
- Prepare a 72-Hour kit – (www.Ready.gov/build-a-kit)
- Know more than one evacuation route out of your neighborhood
- Keep your car’s gas tank full
- Discuss evacuation plans with each member of your household and keep in contact
- Have a plan for your pets, horses and livestock
- Stay calm

Prepare for recovery – the landscape will recover and so will we:

- Prepare your property for potential flooding (https://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/flooding_flood_risks/flood_after_fire.jsp)
- Monitor NOAA Weather Radio (www.weather.gov) and be prepared to seek higher ground in the event of a flood
- Purchase flood insurance
- Watch out for: downed power lines, falling trees, unstable slopes

The Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition is a local collaborative group focusing on creating resilient forests protecting life, property and infrastructure from wildfire in Chelan County. The effort is recognized nationally as the only [Fire Adapted Community Learning Network Hub](#) in Washington.

“Chelan County is no stranger to collaboration,” says Annie Schmidt. “We are extremely fortunate to have strong working relationships with neighboring fire agencies and law enforcement when an emergency situation calls for a coordinated effort,” Schmidt adds. On the Chiwaukum Fire, this effective level of coordination included a smooth evacuation of nearby residences by Chelan County Sheriff’s Department and a unified suppression response from mutual aid partners including the US Forest Service and Chelan County Fire Districts 3, 4, and 9.

This type of collaboration and the Chumstick Coalition’s history success point to an effort taking shape across the country called Fire Adapted Communities (FAC). Under the FAC umbrella of active collaboration, private and public agencies, entities, groups and individuals come together to address community challenges before a wildfire to minimize harm to residents, homes, businesses, utilities and other community assets.

For more information about the Chumstick Coalition visit www.chumstickcoalition.org. For more information about Fire Adapted Communities visit www.fireadapted.org.

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