



Northway Fuels Reduction Helps Alaska Firefighters

The Native Village of Northway, Alaska is surrounded both by stands of very flammable black spruce and a series of connected waterways. This poses a number of problems for firefighters: the spruce has a tendency to spot, flare, and run, and the waterways, while providing a useful pumping source, impede ground travel.

In order to protect Northway from a potentially devastating wildland fire, a ring of fuel breaks have been put in around the village. Employing local villagers, developing job skills, and creating firewood in a region with an average winter temperature of -25° were added benefits to the fuels reduction project.



**Fuels Reduction near the
Native Village of Northway**

A more concrete example of a fuels reduction project at work took place at a home just a few miles from the Northway village center. In the summer of 2004 a fire broke out in the hills near Northway, and as fire fighting resources were called in to do structural protection, they were able to skip this home because the homeowners had participated in a local fuels reduction project, sponsored by Firewise. Firefighters were able to move on to nearby homes that had not participated in the fuels reduction project. By thinning the spruce around the home, this family was spared a serious threat by the wildland fire, and firefighters could utilize their limited time where it was critically needed.