and thought process that accompanied it, which is much more effective than tracking those things through e-mail threads from a large group of colleagues. You have everything in one place. Make a comment and everyone gets it.

We’ve also been using “GoToMeeting” through the neighborhood, which has really improved the effectiveness of our meetings. GoToMeeting is a tool that lets us all sit at our own computers and see the same document in real time. The presenter [of the document] can manipulate it, and we see it as it happens. We can then pass the presenter controls on to someone else, and they can manipulate the same document or put up something else.

Becoming more effective in how we meet electronically is really important. I think the writing is on the wall that we’ll soon be cutting back on the amount of face-to-face meetings we can have, so we must get better at these other ways of communicating.

JM: Have you expanded your network of colleagues and contacts through the neighborhoods?

PS: Our neighborhood is private so we aren’t really trying to bring other people into our discussions. But the neighborhood does provide easy access to our source documents—our charter, strategic plan, etc.—as well as information on who we are, what we do and how we run the team, which has helped us quickly integrate new members into the group.

New members can also look at our previous discussions to get up to speed on the important topics. All of this is packaged much more clearly in the neighborhood than if we relied on e-mail.

JM: Would you recommend the site to other individuals and groups?

PS: It’s really useful for any group that needs to share documents and track their discussions. I help teach a National Fire Danger Rating System course, which is presented every 2 years, so we need to inform previous graduates of significant updates and changes. To do this, we’ve set up a neighborhood as part of a continuing education effort that helps keep graduates up to date.

Want More Information?
To find out more about the neighborhoods or any other aspect of the LLC, you can track down either Nasiatka or Christenson in many of the neighborhoods on www.myfirecommunity.net, or you can contact them the old-fashioned way by sending e-mails to either nasiatka@fs.fed.us or dchristenson@fs.fed.us.