

FOOTHILL FIRE FLASH

El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC)

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Message From the Chair - Ken Pimlott

The fire safe councils in El Dorado County used the slower 2023 fire season to double down on wildfire preparedness efforts. Councils were very engaged in information and education, including participation in the El Dorado County Fair, hosting a Veterans Day breakfast and development of a comprehensive wildfire preparedness workbook. The EDCFSC website was completely overhauled with a new look and improved functionality.

The EDCFSC chipping and defensible space assistance programs grew significantly in 2023. In addition, the hazardous tree removal program was initiated to

Be a Firewise Community- get insurance discounts

Many associate Fire Safe Councils and other El Dorado County areas have taken the extra step- they've also become designated as "Firewise Communities" by the National Fire Protection Association.

Benefits

- A framework to get started toward annual, systematic action to reduce wildfire risks
- Connection with local fire professionals, who help identify your community's risks
- Insurance discounts for Cal FAIR Plan, USAA and others, for all residents
- Access to free educational materials
- Access to funding. Preference is sometimes given to Firewise USA® sites over other grant applicants.

The process

Getting designated as a Firewise Community does take some work, especially in the beginning. A community risk assessment, done with help from local fire professionals, is a critical first step, focusing on vulnerabilities of homes and surrounding home ignition zones to embers in particular. Some areas create the risk assessment by driving their area, including with local professionals, while others have tried online surveys of residents. The community must be between 8 and 2,500 dwelling units in size.

Following the risk assessment, an annual action plan is created, (which must be updated every three years.) A report is submitted every year, confirming that the minimum of, on average, one hour of work per house, (which can include contractor work), has been performed. Such work can be as simple as one hour of leaf raking. Being an average for the whole

"The national Firewise USA recognition program provides a **collaborative framework** to help neighbors in a geographic area **get organized, find direction, and take action** to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community and **to reduce wild-fire risks** at the local level."

assist residents with removing dead and dying trees. The three programs performed over 1,000 jobs and provided over \$750,000 in vegetation clearance and tree removal work during the year.

The Associate Fire Safe council network grew to 31. In addition, the EDCFSC brought on Tamara Johnston as a grants program manager who is providing training, grant committee coordination and overall grant administration.

EDCFSC members participated in numerous working groups and regular meetings, including the EDC Public Outreach Working Group, Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience Coordination Group, Disaster Council and Fire Prevention Officers Association. EDCFSC and its partners trained 70 volunteer home assessors who completed hundreds of volunteer evaluations and set an example for other voluntary evaluation programs around California.

A sincere thank you to all the dedicated fire safe council volunteers, EDCFSC staff and partners who continue to dedicate your time and energy to helping make El Dorado County more fire resilient. I look forward to another productive year in 2024.

Ken Pimlott, Chair, EDCFSC

community, typically this is met by the more extensive work of a portion of residents. Finally, every five years, the designation must be renewed. The NFPA Firewise webpage has lots of useful info and forms to help you get started. [Become a Firewise Community](#).

Help is available

[Richard Galvin](#) of the El Dorado County Office of Wildfire Preparation and Resilience is our Firewise Coordinator for Western El Dorado County. He can help you get started, as well as with renewal /hour reporting annually, and required recertification every 5 years.

“Becoming a Firewise Community was time-consuming but we’re glad we did it. The action plan helped us agree to a schedule to get things actually done. Also, it feels good to know that residents can get insurance discounts.” *Oak Hill Area FSC chair*

Work that was done through EDCFSC in each Firewise community also counts! (chipping, hazard tree, def. space programs): contact [Jessica Simmons](#).

“We celebrate and collect hours/\$ for our yearly Firewise renewal at our FSC’s annual “Community Day” picnic, awarding prizes for the most defensible space and home hardening work done.”

EDCFSC



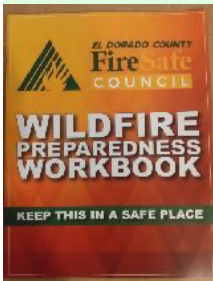
How far is your home from other buildings? It matters!

[Studies by IBHS](#) (Insurance Institute of Business and Home Safety) have found that buildings less than 50 feet from your home can be a major risk to your home burning down. This can be from larger

New Workbooks available! Keep them handy

There are TWO excellent and complementary workbooks available now for resident use, available free at the EDCFSC office at 515 Main St, Suite 103:

1. EDC Fire Safe Council has produced a “**Wildfire Preparedness Workbook**”



focused on evacuation, with many useful links pertinent to our area. It also includes good defensible space advice and state-of-the-art home hardening info.

2. CAL FIRE has produced an equally useful “**Wildfire Action**



Plan” focused on defensible space, home hardening, evacuation and insurance preparation.

The two books complement each other well. Keep both handy!

buildings like guest houses, but also from smaller buildings like chicken coops. The reason? The **radiant heat** from a building is intense, and when close enough, can catch a nearby building on fire.

When buildings are 25-50 feet apart, extra home hardening, such as tempered windows, can greatly reduce the risk. But if buildings are less than 25 feet* apart, even extra hardening will not be enough to prevent one building catching another on fire. The key is to either remove the too-close building, or work to keep both/all such buildings from catching fire so that they do not all ignite in turn like dominoes. This is an issue on one property with its various outbuildings, but also in a subdivision when homes are less than 25 feet* away from each other.

The take-away: measure!

- If your home is **at least 50 feet from all other buildings**, yours or your neighbors, then all you need to worry about is ember protection (assuming you also have good defensible space against actual flames)
- If your home is **25-50 feet from another building**, yours or a neighbor’s, you’ll need to do extra home hardening on that side, unless the too-near building can be simply removed

The radiant heat from even a small shed burning can ignite your home if it is less than 50 feet away



- If your home is **<25 feet* from another building**, efforts should be made to protect all such buildings against ignition by embers or flames, so that none of the buildings catch fire, threatening others with intense radiant heat.



All these homes are at risk of igniting from radiant heat if one ignites from embers.

* CAL FIRE and the Insurance Commissioner’s *Safer from Wildfire* program use 30 feet as the benchmark instead of 25 feet



The **EDCFSC Hazard Tree removal** assistance program has been very successful but available funds are almost gone. The program will close by **Mar. 1**, however, will re-open once additional funds are secured.

Fire Protection in the County

Wonder how fire protection works here? Private property in the western slope of the county is covered by **Eight fire protection districts**, **One fire department**, and **One large CAL FIRE Unit**. From west to east these are:

- **El Dorado Hills**
- **Rescue** (incl. Shingle Springs)
- **Cameron Park Fire Department**

- **Garden Valley**
- **Georgetown**
- **Mosquito**

- **Diamond Springs/El Dorado***
- **El Dorado County*** (includes Placerville, Camino, Pollock Pines).
- *These 2 Districts share services now

- **Pioneer** (Mt.Aukum/Omo Ranch)

- **Amador/El Dorado CAL FIRE Unit** (covers private property throughout both counties except Placerville, parts of El Dorado Hills, which are "local responsibility areas")

Each district has a chief, and they join those from the Tahoe basin and the chief of the Amador/El Dorado CAL FIRE Unit to form the **El Dorado County Fire Chiefs Association**, with bi-monthly meetings.

Functioning under the Fire Chiefs Association is the group **EDC Fire Prevention Officers** who also meet regularly. These officers work with residents and fire safe councils to improve wildfire prevention.

By working together these groups ensure that standards and ordinances are as close as possible to each other, eliminating inconsistencies.

Are you aware of *Fire Safe Plans*?

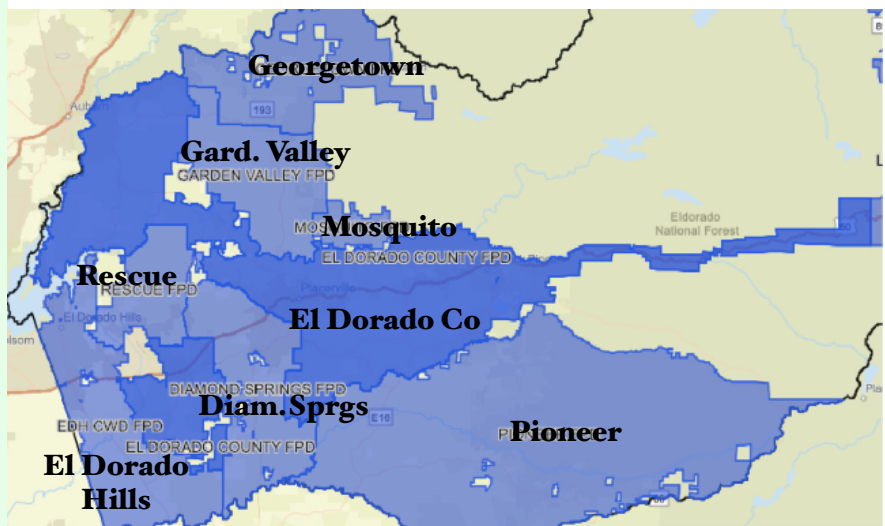
As new developments or other land use changes occur in our County, a *Fire Safe Plan* is generally required. These *Fire Safe Plans* identify measures to be taken to reduce wildfire risks as new areas are developed. All of our narrow, 1-way in/out roads approved in the 1970's would not be approved today! Plans consider:

- available water,
- access for emergency vehicles,
- defensible space and building fire resistance,
- vegetation management (such as creating shaded fuel breaks)
- other fire protection measures.

These plans have strict requirements that are set by the State and local fire protection districts and are required to be prepared by qualified experts. They are then reviewed by the local fire district to make sure that the proposed development or land use changes won't make the wildfire risk worse

The El Dorado Hills Fire Dept. standard for fire safe plans, adopted in 2022, is used across the county, [available online here](#),

Fire Protection Districts



Fire Safe Council News

Assessor Training April 19 and 20

Did you miss last year's great 2-day, free training to become a volunteer assessor in your Fire Safe Council? Providing knowledgeable, 1-1/2 to 2 hour home-specific assessments on both defensible space and home hardening can be an important impetus for residents to do effective wildfire preparation. To sign up for the training, contact [Hugh Council](#). To request a free assessment of your own house/property, contact [Carri Lueck](#)



EDCFSC sponsored
Veteran's Day Breakfast
November 2023

A delicious, complete breakfast was provided to veterans and their families last November by a host of Fire Safe Council volunteers from around the county. A huge thank you to **Karen Pullin** and **Johnny Valenzuela** of the **Mosquito Fire Safe Council** who orchestrated the event. Thank you also to the many volunteers, from **Mosquito, Diamond Springs, Texas Hill, Placerville, Georgetown Divide, Oak Hill Area, and Camino Fire Safe Councils.**

EDCFSC wanted to honor Veterans and thank them for providing original seed money for the Vet/Senior/low income defensible space program.

We welcome **Rescue
Community Fire Safe
Council**, the **31st** FSC in
the County!



Upcoming Public Workshops

- * OWPR Hazardous Vegetation Management Ordinance Workshop. Gain a better understanding of defensible space requirements and how proposed changes may impact you. Questions can be submitted beforehand. Workshop is in person, but with an online option - [workshop and ordinance info here](#)

Feb. 13. 6-8 PM, Tahoe Basin, Meyers Elem. Sch. Multipurpose Rm., 1095 San Bernardino Ave.

Feb. 29 6-8 PM, Cameron Park CSD, East Assembly Hall, 2502 Country Club Ln.

- * Greater Placerville Wildfire Evacuation Preparedness, Community Safety, and Resiliency Study. The El Dorado County Transportation Commission (EDCTC) will provide an update on the study, which identifies improvements needed to allow the public to evacuate during a wildfire, and first responders to get into the community to fight the fire.

Mar. 19. Virtual meeting. Watch for time, link, to be posted two weeks prior, [here](#).

Helpful Links- reduce risk!

[El Dorado Co. Fire Safe Council](#) [Free chipping prog.](#) [Hazard Tree Program](#) (closing by Mar 1st- apply soon!). (Senior/Vet/low income program is currently on hold)

[EDC Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience](#) includes insurance updates

[EDC Sheriff Office of Emergency Services \(OES\)](#) alert and warning information

[Defensible Space](#) [Home hardening](#) [Insurance discounts](#)

[Burning information](#)