

FOOTHILL FIRE FLASH

El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC)

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Be Wildfire Ready! Your Voice, Your Plan, Our Future.

The EDC Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience (OWPR) wants to hear from you!

Wed. Oct 2, 6-8 PM

Pioneer School, Somerset

Thurs. Oct 3, 6-8PM

Golden Sierra High School,
Garden Valley

Sat. Oct 5

9-11 AM Pinewood School,
Pollock Pines

1-3 PM Fireman's Hall
Diamond Springs

4-6 PM Community Services
District, Cameron Park

Bring your ideas, concerns, & priorities for West Slope wildfire risk reduction. Help ensure that the plan developed is both comprehensive and actionable!

New Insurance Discount for unincorporated areas of the County

El Dorado County is one of just 7 entire counties across California to be designated as a “**Wildfire Risk Reduction Community**”, worthy of an insurance discount for residents. This designation by the California Board of Forestry is due to the hard work of the EDC Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience, CAL FIRE, Fire Protection districts, EDC Planning and Building Dept. and others. It does not by any means imply that we are wildfire-proof, but it does mean that we have important safe guards and plans in place and in the works - that we are meeting best fire planning practices. Being on the list also means that our county will have priority for many wildfire prevention grants.



Insurance Discount. Some insurance agents are just learning about this designation, which only happened in mid-June. It is one of two community programs - the other being the Firewise program - mentioned as eligible for discounts on the Calif. Insurance Commissioner's discount website [Safer From Wildfire](#). If you live in the broad unincorporated area of the County, talk to your own broker, and point them to the [list of communities](#). Unlike the Firewise Community Discount that some areas are eligible for, there is no certificate needed.

Our role as residents. The county will need to reapply every two years to stay on the list, showing that progress is being made on risk reduction. Our job now as residents is to help see those plans come to fruition, by our own defensible space and home hardening efforts, and by supporting fuel reduction projects along our roads and in our communities.

Lessons Learned- Moccasin and Pay Fire

We dodged a bullet, thanks to the impressive work by CAL FIRE, local fire departments (including Tribal), BLM, Eldorado National Forest, Sheriff's Office, and more. Both fires were during very hot, dry, July days, aligning with difficult terrain. Both could have exploded but did not, thanks to the low winds, aggressive ground and air attacks by firefighters, and some important earlier fuel reduction by residents. No lives and few structures were destroyed. Our thanks are profound. Our opportunity now is to learn from those fires.

North County's Crozier Fire was still burning as we went to press. We'll look at lessons from that fire in the next issue. It's a busy year for fires. Stay vigilant!

The **Moccasin Fire** started near the end of South County's unincorporated Oak Hill Road, where dense vegetation caught from a house fire. It spread up the ridge towards many homes, but was stopped before destroying any, at just 52 acres.

The **Pay Fire** started when a tree fell on an electric line in a heavily vegetated area on the edge of Placerville. It could have been disastrous if it had spread south further into Texas Hill Estates or north into greater Placerville. Instead it was stopped at 77 acres.

What went right? Where as a community might we do better? Lessons from these fires might help us dodge future, bigger bullets if we act on our knowledge.

1. Defensible space and fuel reduction work really helped in both fires.

CAL FIRE emphasized that good defensible space of at least one threatened home helped CAL FIRE hold the north boundary of the Moccasin Fire. That helped not only the home itself, but also the whole community. For the Pay Fire, fuel reduction work in Texas Hill Estates had resulted in thinned fuels so that the fire slowed, enabling control there as well.



Texas Hill Estates fuel thinning project **before** the Pay Fire, showing denseness of vegetation nearby.



Texas Hill Estates fuel thinning project **after** the Pay Fire, showing how it helped keep fire intensity low.

2. Water was not an issue for either fire, helping quick control.

A hydrant located far down Oak Hill Rd (most of which does not have hydrants) was a big help for the Moccasin Fire. Hydrants were plentiful in the vicinity of the Pay Fire.



3. The Placerville airport acted as an excellent fire break for the Pay Fire, just as defensible space can do.

As the Pay Fire spread north and east through dense vegetation, northward movement into Placerville was easier to stop because of the wide airport runways. A large wildfire would likely jump such a break, but they can be very effective when wildfires are still small.



4. Neither fire started where homes are close together (less than 30 ft from each other)

That was a big help, because it meant that when the few structures that did burn threw off intense heat, there were no structures nearby for that heat to ignite. Dense neighborhoods are at risk of rapid home to home ignition.

5. Narrow roads were a big challenge in the more rural Moccasin Fire.

The Moccasin Fire was centered on Moccasin Trail, a very narrow, rural road which made access tight for fire engines. Narrow roads are our legacy in many parts of the county and not easily widened, but adding turnouts where possible can help, along with thinning the vegetation along the side.



6. Non-reflective, makeshift or missing street and address signs were a hindrance in the Moccasin Fire.

Address signs and street signs are really important, not just for evacuation notification, but also so firefighters can use them to stage their response: for giving directions, coordinating passing each other on narrow roads, assigning areas for firefighters to go to, etc. Firefighters had difficulty locating or identifying some streets and addresses on the Moccasin Fire due to missing or non-reflective signs. Fires can cause very smoky and dark conditions, even during the day. The Oak Hill FSC offers reflective signs at near cost to help.



Nice homemade sign still stands, but reflective sign has been installed also.

7. Fires spotting ahead of the main front can happen even when winds are light.

Both fires had dangerous spot fires jump beyond their perimeters, even though the weather was not windy. That's because fires themselves have convection currents that move embers, and/or hilly terrain causes embers to travel downhill.



Typical spot fire ahead of main front

8. Narrow, one way in/out roads of the Oak Hill area meant that evacuation orders and warnings had to be more extensive.

Fires can change their direction and behavior rapidly, and the Sheriff's Office (OES) needed to account for the narrow roads that could hinder evacuations, as they designated the orders, warning areas, and road closures. OES was on scene at the Moccasin Fire in 15 minutes, and at the Pay Fire in 7, assisting quickly with getting firefighters in and residents out, according to Officer Whitlock.

Sign on Oak Hill Rd. installed by residents



as a helpful tool to monitor their evacuation situation. It was noted that street names were hard to access on Perimeter for roads designated as evacuation routes.

9. The Perimeter website was a great help, and RAVE alerts went out..

Many residents in evacuation warning and order areas mentioned that they had received the RAVE alerts, and that they went to Perimeter again and again,

Roofs: Home Hardening Spotlight

Almost everyone in California now has a Class A roof covering, which is so important to help a house not catch fire. (If you are one of the .1% or so who still has a wood shake roof, upgrading to Class A should be by far your first priority). But there's a lot more to a roof and its vulnerability than just its covering. The actions described below are not required by law, but like all home hardening, can greatly increase the chance of your house surviving even a large wildfire.

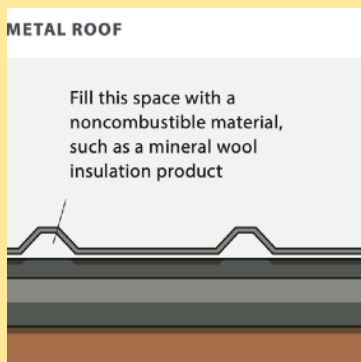
Gaps: Most roofs have gaps, giving access to flying embers. And embers $>1/8$ inch in size have enough energy to start any wood they hit, such as the plywood sheathing under the roofing, on fire, especially when they arrive by the thousands. Gaps can often be found:



*at the roof edge in places where plywood is exposed from warping of roofing or loose shingles. To make this area noncombustible, 90 deg." drip edge" can be installed to cover all sheathing/fascia board edges (unless already protected by gutter flanges).

Metal drip edge over plywood and fascia board

*at the corners where gutters are attached. Metal drip edge can help here too, to cover the combustible sheathing at this type of gap. (The drip edge in the photo should be extended to cover the gap better.)



Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide, UNR

*at the ends of metal or clay roofing. "Bird stop", metal caps etc. can be carefully applied to fully fill these gaps.

Roof spotlight (cont)

Another roof vulnerability:

Where walls directly meet a roof, such as at dormers: Embers that fall on Class “A” roofs are likely to just burn out, except where a roof is right next to combustible walls. These short, vulnerable wall sections are a good place to consider replacing the combustible siding with noncombustible siding - such as fiber cement or three coat stucco - even if not done for the whole house. Installing metal flashing where wall and roof meet is another solution, and keeping debris like dead leaves and needles off here is critical.



Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide, UNR

Don't start a fire yourself!

Creating defensible space in summer?

- Don't mow at all on a hot or windy day. On cooler days, mow early - before 10AM
- Using a string trimmer is better - there's no metal blade to throw sparks that could ignite dry plants.
- When watering plants less (to conserve water) be sure and vigilantly remove dead or dying plants, branches,



Gold Ridge Forest FSC's great new banner. EDCFSC will be using grant funds soon to create numerous banners with different messages for FSCs to use.

Fire Safe Council Doings



The FSC built a permanent metal frame the banner attaches to, which then folds back behind the "Welcome" sign when not in use.

Volcanoville Fire Safe Council hangs Red Flag Warning

banners whenever the [NOAA website](#)

designates that for their community. They put them up in 3 different places, with each one adopted by a volunteer "banner keeper" who stores the banner at home. The Red Flag Warning chair sends a text to each keeper when a red flag warning occurs, and also initiates a Facebook post and emails those on the community email list, explaining what not to do in such a warning event. If that volunteer goes on vacation, they give the banner to another designated volunteer so that there are no time gaps.

Typically they have about two red flag warning periods a year, the FSC says.

"For us, there is very little effort or time involved with the red flag warning banners and it is well worth it to inform our community of any potential risk or hazard.... we all are happy to do what we can for our neighbors."

Traci, Volcanoville FSC

Note: Several of these "Red Flag Warning" banners are still available from the EDCFSC. If your FSC would like to implement this, contact Carri at (530) 647-1700.



Gallagher Road FSC made their own "Wildfire Danger" dial sign, that they adjust based on the [NOAA website](#) as well. They installed it next to their community bulletin board, where they also have posted an EDCFSC "Ember Aware!" poster.

Fort Jim FSC's new metal sign, where magnetic meeting info part can be replaced for each meeting.





Camino FSC

National Night Out, Aug. 6

“We had more signups asking for Firewise, and Neighborhood Radio Watch information than at most other events I’ve participated in.”

Tom, Placerville FSC



Placerville FSC: seven neighborhood block parties and five community parties!

Summer get-togethers



Greenstone FSC's Firewise Fiesta, May



Lake Arrowbee gathering, Coloma-Lotus FSC

Need help figuring out what to do, or getting it done?-

El Dorado Co. Fire Safe Council

Free chipping prog.

Senior/vet/low income program

Defensible Space

Home hardening

Insurance discounts

Volunteer Assessments - free!

Informal assessments are offered by El Dorado County Fire Safe Council volunteers, most of whom went through a two day hands on training to learn cutting edge home hardening and defensible space pointers. Assessments cover both aspects of wildfire prep. If you want to learn proven ways specific to your own home that really can help it survive a wildfire, request a free home visit from such a volunteer in your area, at (530) 647-1700 or [EDC FSC website](#).



Hazard Tree Help - for all

Concerned about a dead, dying, or beetle-infested tree that could hit your driveway or house? The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council can help here too, thanks to state grant funds received.

Certified arborists will be sent to assess your trees, and you can receive up to \$4000 of tree felling and chipping services per property. Unless you are low income, you will be asked to contribute 25% of the cost.

[Details and sign up form are here.](#)



Help for Seniors, veterans, or low income:

Can't physically do the defensible space work you need, and hard to financially swing hiring someone? The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council will send a contractor at no cost to you, to do basic defensible space work, thanks to grants obtained. The contractor will do things like rake leaves, prune plants, and limb up trees. They will not clean gutters or roofs, or fell trees. [Read details and sign up.](#)