

# FOOTHILL FIRE FLASH

## El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC)

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## Helpful assessments - *free*

Are you wondering what the wildfire risks are at your specific property and home? Are you feeling overwhelmed and wondering where to best focus your efforts on defensible space and/or home hardening work? Or, have you done a lot of defensible space and/or home hardening work, and are wondering if you need to do more?

To help you, the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC) and its associates offer **detailed home assessments**, which are purely educational. Some 75 volunteers have gone through a full, 2 day long training, sponsored by CAL FIRE,

fire protection districts, and EDCFSC. These volunteers are now visiting home exteriors and yards at the request of homeowners, giving free, up-to-date advice on best home hardening *and* defensible space practices. [Request a visit](#), which generally lasts 1-2 hours, from trained volunteers near you.

In addition, CAL FIRE has already conducted nearly 3,000 **defensible space inspections** (for compliance with state reg. 4291) in



Hugh Council talks with homeowners during Texas Hill assessment

the county this year, conducted in various predetermined areas. You may have received a notice on your door saying you meet their requirements, or noting needed improvements. The next homes they plan to inspect are in the Crazy Horse area of Cameron Park.

## Homes really *can* survive a wildfire!

And the chances can be quite high when appropriate defensible space AND home hardening retrofits have been done.

Watch an [inspiring video](#):



## Welcome Rescue Community FSC!

**31st** FSC in the county.  
Wonder if your area is in a FSC? Visit the [map](#).

## Insurance News

The insurance situation is in crisis, as many know. and it's not just in California. Florida is in crisis with their hurricane insurance, as well as other states. The Calif. insurance commissioner has been working to develop a [sustainable insurance plan](#) for our state going forward.

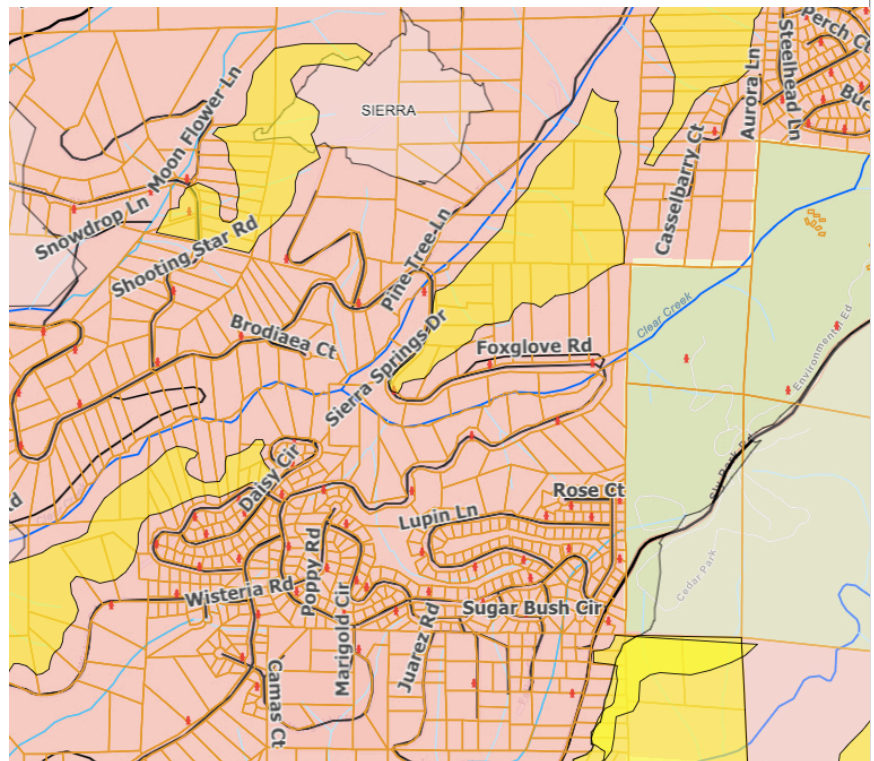
Some key parts of the [plan](#):

- Working with insurers to get more residents off the FAIR Plan and into normal markets.
- Giving those who comply with ["Safer from Wildfire"](#) requirements (see next page) first priority to transition off FAIR Plan.
- Ordering changes to FAIR Plan to prevent its going bankrupt.

## New Mapping Tool

A wonderful new online mapping tool is available for use by the public to help with wildfire preparedness. Fire Safe Councils (FSCs) can now tailor a map to their specific needs, print it poster-size or larger at a printing shop, and provide it at FSC meetings for residents to mull over, plan projects, etc.

This interactive tool allows you to choose and overlay various layers onto an area you choose. Current layers available include land ownership, fire safe council boundaries, resources such as fire station and fire hydrant locations, current and historical wildfires and fire prevention projects. More layers will be added, such as Firewise Community boundaries, updated Fire Severity Hazard Zones, etc.



Example: a portion of map, Sierra Springs Fire Safe Council.

Fire Hazard Severity Zone (**pink**-very high), fire hydrants (**red** dots), **lot** boundaries, old fire footprints (e.g. **pink** "Sierra" at top), **roads**, RCD fire prevention projects as of May 2023 (**yellow**), and forest service land (**green**)

## Insurance News (cont.)

Basic [Safer From Wildfire](#)

requirements to qualify are:

### 1. Home Hardening:

- Class A rated roof
- 5 foot ember resistant zone including fencing
- Ember and fire-resistant vents
- Non-combustible 6 inches at bottom of exterior walls
- Enclosed eaves
- Multi-paned windows or added shutters
- No structures (including dog houses) within 30 ft of home

### 2. Defensible space:

Compliance with EDC def. sp. ordinance and 4291 (state)

### 3. Being in a Firewise Community

## Different Insurance Requirements

In addition to the Insurance Commissioner's "[Safer From Wildfire](#)" program, the nonprofit Insurance Institute of Business and Home Safety (IBHS) has a separate program- the [Wildfire Prepared Home](#).

Compliance with this similar but more stringent program, which is limited

## New Mapping Tool (cont.)

This amazing mapping tool was developed through a partnership between the El Dorado County GIS Program, El Dorado County Water Agency and the Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience (OWPR)

The online mapping site will undergo continuous improvement with additional data and functionality added over time, including the ability to export and import datasets, as well as save workspace projects for future sessions. Feedback suggesting future improvements are welcome.

**Try it out!** Go to the following link on the OWPR website and create your own map: <https://www.edcgov.us/Government/CAO/OWPR/Pages/Mapping.aspx>.

## Prescribed Burns - Smoke

Have you been bothered lately by smoke from prescribed burns in our area? Take heart. While the smoke can be annoying, "***existing evidence suggests that wildfires have a greater potential for harmful smoke exposure when compared to prescribed fire***", although more data is needed. ([American Lung Association report, 2022](#)) Prescribed fire smoke is only from wood (vs burning synthetics of wildfires). It is also generally produced on wind-free days, therefore tending to be more localized (and easier to avoid).

To check your own hazard at any given time, visit [purpleair.com](https://purpleair.com) and visit the realtime map

of your area. You want the EPA 2.5 micron particulate data because that's the size that is most dangerous, going deep into lungs. Consider staying indoors when numbers near you are over 100. If you have sensitive people in your household (those with underlying respiratory and cardiovascular conditions, children and older adults, people who are pregnant), consider indoor air purifiers.



## Insurance News (cont)

currently to California, **has been required by at least one insurance company (not the FAIR Plan) for the insured to follow.** Certification as a "[wildfire prepared home](#)": requires:

- parts of "[safer from wildfire](#)" program (listed above), but not eave or window requirements
- Noncombustible gutters and downspouts, clear of debris
- Dryer vent with louver or flap (instead of mesh)
- Decks, attached or not, must be clear of debris, with non-combustible furniture, have nothing stored and no vegetation underneath. Decks < 4ft. high must be enclosed underneath.
- No vegetation or overhanging limbs, combustible items, or boats, RVs, vehicles within 5 ft. of home
- 10 ft. canopy separation for trees if >4" diameter, limbed up 6 ft. or more. Shrubs: no rows, nor growing under trees, and spaced 2x their height from other shrubs

## Also, Insurance Discounts Coming!

The Calif. Insurance Commissioner and Dept. of Insurance continue to work with insurance companies to provide discounts for wildfire preparedness efforts within communities, around homes, and as home hardening improvements. This is a dynamic process with frequent changes and updates. The EDC Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience (OWPR) has developed an [insurance page](#) on its website dedicated to sharing information as it becomes available.

Overall, **remember that prescribed burns are beneficial.**

They are low intensity, planned burns that occur only when conditions, including wind, are favorable. These burns remove flammable understory, reducing the intensity of any future, unplanned wildfires, thereby protecting communities. They also recycle nutrients back into soil, make room for new growth that can be forage for wildlife, and help reduce the spread of insects and disease in forests. For more visit [El Dorado County Prescribed Burn Assoc.](#)

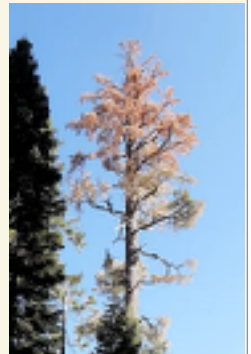
### Where are prescribed burns happening?

As the weather cools this Fall, prescribed burns are happening locally and throughout Northern California. It's exciting to see this important wildfire management tool being used more and more. To check the location of current prescribed burns, use the [Watch duty](#) app, which shows both wildfires (**orange**) and prescribed burns (**green**). For El Dorado National Forest burns, you can also visit [here](#).

## Hazard Tree Removal Program Underway

EDCFSC is offering help with the removal of hazard trees, thanks to State grant funds. This is a cost-share program for individual homeowners on the West Slope of El Dorado County, with:

75% paid by EDCFSC grant  
25% paid by homeowner (unless low income: then 0%)



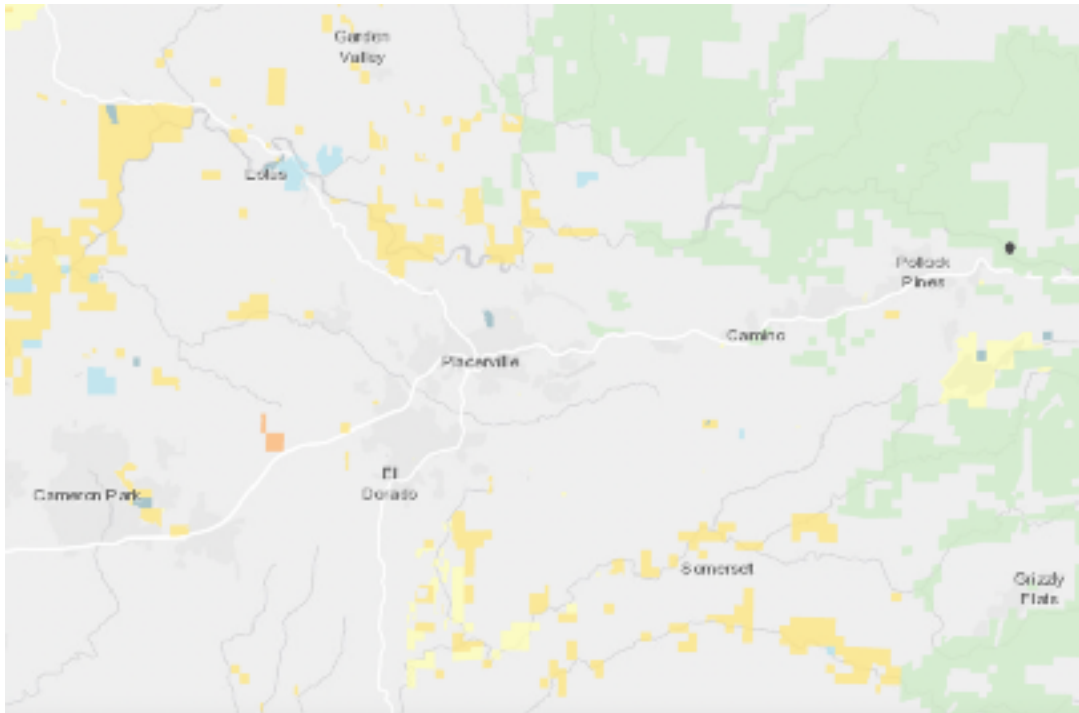
### Trees that may be felled and treated under this program:

- Dead and dying Trees > 7" in diameter that are within 150 ft. of structures, driveways, or access roads
- Trees >7" diameter with active beetle infestation
- Trees with active beetles within 300 ft. of structures



## Is Bureau of Land Management (BLM) a Neighbor?

BLM owns many parcels of land scattered throughout the county, including areas where people live. BLM simply does not have the resources to address fuel on all these parcels. To see where BLM land is near you, visit [BLM's mapping tool](#). If you are concerned about hazardous,



BLM (dark yellow) and BOR (light yellow) lands on West Slope

overgrown vegetation on BLM land next to yours, you can request a free permit to reduce the fuel there yourself within 200 feet of your property. The process is pretty simple. The property owner of a parcel adjacent

to BLM needs to contact

[Jorge Pacheco](#) 916-941-3123 at BLM, who has been found to be easy to work with. The permit is good for two years, but comes with some restrictions - mostly that you must use hand work rather than heavy equipment. Material can be chipped and left on the BLM parcel., but if you want to burn it, it needs to be moved to private property.

There may be a way for FSCs to apply as an organization to do some clearing too. Check with [Jorge Pacheco](#) if that is of interest.

## Is Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) a Neighbor?

You may be surprised to find that you have a BOR parcel (light yellow in map above) adjoining yours instead of BLM. These lands were presumably purchased long ago in anticipation of earlier considered dam projects. BOR is starting to conduct fuel reduction projects on some but not all of their county lands. [Elizabeth Dyer](#) is the person to contact if you are concerned about BOR overgrown vegetation near your property.

# Fire Safe Council Doings

Many fire safe councils (FSC) presented educational meetings for their residents and held green waste events over the late summer and early fall. Bravo! In addition **Mosquito FSC** experimented successfully with small “block parties”, and **Strawberry FSC** was successful in having huge log decks removed.



## 1. Mosquito FSC block parties - a big success

The Mosquito FSC had their first two “block parties” over the last two months. These parties worked well, and fulfilled the goal of engaging smaller groups of people while also providing an avenue for neighbors to socialize and get to know each other better (an important step towards community preparedness). The FSC provided 2-3 community speakers at each (Office of Emergency Services OES, CAL FIRE, Community Emer. Radio Assoc.- CERA- etc. ). Taking cues from community interest, one

block party focused on evacuation and emergency preparedness, while the other focused on large animal rescue.

Both get togethers were held in the front yard of a host residence. Food helped to bring folks in - one was a potluck plus food added by the host, and the other was a catered taco bar, paid for by the host and neighbors. Physical fliers were distributed in each neighborhood (one road and its adjoining courts) and a social media campaign invited other members of the FSC to attend. Attendance at each was 50-60 people, whereas general meetings had recently drawn in just 10.

At the block parties, the Mosquito FSC saw a number of people sign up for home assessments, and to participate in the CERA Radio Program. There was plenty of time for questions and engagement from the community, thanks to limiting the number of speakers, who were excellent.

Video of their event:



Want to try something like this for your FSC or Firewise Community? Mosquito FSC is happy to answer any questions at: [mosquitofsc@gmail.com](mailto:mosquitofsc@gmail.com)

## **Their advice to others trying this successful approach:**

- Don't be afraid to try something new
- Strive to make the block party different from a normal meeting, with things (like food) to bring folks back
- Less is more: Don't overwhelm with info. Focus on building relationships, with three speakers or less, and 1-3 key takeaways.

## 2. Strawberry FSC perseveres - successfully advocates for log removal

The Strawberry FSC was faced with massive piles of logs stacked in their community after PG&E contractors had removed a high volume of dead and dying trees following the Caldor Fire. With no requirement by PG&E for the contractor to haul them away, the FSC stepped in. With “easily half of the community buried in huge trees laying on their lots” (Angel Ball, Strawberry FSC chair), the FSC held a community meeting with a PG&E representative to show them just how big the new log decks were. Though told again that there was no plan to haul the log decks away, the FSC did not give up.

Not only were the logs a fire hazard, they also created new water runoff issues with last year’s unusually high precipitation (300% of normal). The logs narrowed the roadways, making both snow removal and access in and out of the residences more difficult.

Trying a new tack, the FSC walked the neighborhood with the original contractor (Mt. Enterprises) in April 2023, to show the damage the trees left on the ground were causing. It worked. Mt. Enterprises then advocated on Strawberry’s behalf and received authorization to remove all trees from the 2022 harvest!

### **The Moral:**

Perseverance can pay off, and FSCs can be successful community advocates!



Angel Ball in front of one of the many massive log decks left in her Strawberry community.

The FSC then acted proactively to negotiate with PG&E over their 2023 hazard tree removal project, so that the 2023 trees would be hauled away as well. The FSC was again successful.

Strawberry thanks Mt. Enterprises for their help (especially representative Ron Buffum), and PG&E for doing the right thing for Strawberry!

CAL FIRE has updated their **Wildfire Action Plan booklets**, which now include the all-important 0-5 ft zone. FSCs can obtain copies from the 515 Main St. Suite 103 office, to hand out in their FSCs. These complement nicely the EDCFSC Wildfire Prepared workbooks.



## Don't be the one to start a wildfire!

**CAL FIRE** With the arrival of fall, and an increased use of wood-burning stoves, fireplaces, outdoor fire pits, BBQs, and more, it's important to know the **correct way to handle ashes**. Proper ash disposal is essential in keeping your property and neighborhood safe. Here are some tips to ensure you do it correctly:

- 1** Always use a metal container for ash disposal - NEVER opt for paper bags, plastic bags, or cardboard boxes.
- 2** Take the metal container outside immediately and pour water over the ashes to cool down any hot embers. Remember, coals and wood pieces can smolder for days.
- 3** Stir the water into the ashes using a stick to ensure everything is cold.
- 4** Securely cover the container with a lid and store it away from flammable materials.
- 5** If you decide to vacuum your ashes, ensure you use an appropriate "ash vacuum" designed to handle hot and cold embers. Never use your regular home vacuum for this purpose.
- 6** Never put ashes from your wood-burning stove in your regular garbage can, as they can ignite a fire.
- 7** Avoid discarding hot ashes onto dry vegetation, as it could cause a fire.

Remember, always treat ashes as if they're hot, don't add live embers to an ash bucket,

### **Pile Burning Update**

- Suspension lifted as of October 24 2023
- Permit is still needed, [apply here](#)
- Must be done on a burn day in piles 4ft diameter max, with 10 ft. clearance, and water available.
- Burn barrels prohibited as always

View [CAL FIRE burning information](#), including burning alternatives- maybe you can dispose of slash a different way!



## Thank you County-wide event volunteers

The EDC Fire Safe Council continues to provide info at county-wide events, including an August event at the Placerville library geared toward young families (an often overlooked group), the Veteran Stand-Down at the Vet Hall in September, and the “Fall Into Gardening” event hosted by Master Gardeners in October. As we continue to try to reach all groups in the county (where only half of residents are signed up for RAVE and many are not in any associate FSC), we thank the following EDCFSC volunteers for helping - handing out workbooks and providing wildfire preparation information. They have gone above and beyond all they already do for their own FSCs!

Dorothy Fine, **Camino FSC**; Alma Lepe, **Placerville FSC**; Ernie Lory, **Grizzly Flat FSC**; Terri Kline, **Camino FSC**; Lester Lubetkin, **Oak Hill Area FSC**; Alice Cantelow, **Oak Hill Area FSC**.