

FOOTHILL FIRE FLASH

El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC)

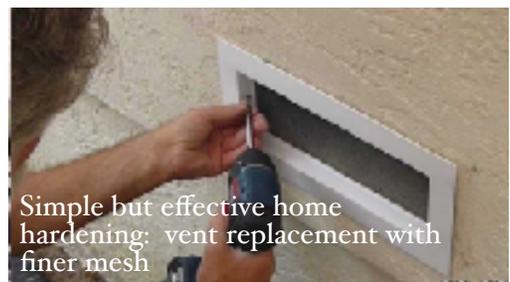
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A Wildfire Plan for the West Slope is now in development: be ready to engage!

A comprehensive plan for protecting the entire West Slope of El Dorado County is being created, with the process expected to take roughly one year. Input from the public will be very important throughout the process, to ensure the updated plan best represents the needs and insights of residents. Do you know of a drainage, subdivision, or unmanaged wildland that is

particularly vulnerable to spreading wildfire? Do you have an idea on how to increase participation by residents in protecting their own homes and communities? This will be your chance to provide input and have your concerns and thoughts addressed!



The updated wildfire protection plan (formally called a CWPP - or “Community Wildfire Protection Plan”) will identify projects, help prioritize them, and better position our community for funding opportunities over the next 5-10 years. It will also fill geographical gaps not previously evaluated.

New Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Map - final

CAL FIRE’s much anticipated new fire hazard severity zone map is now finalized and available online. Public input did result in some tweaks to the new maps. These maps use more comprehensive models than the 2007 version did, including ember fore-casting. In general, as for most of the Sierra foothills, a much larger portion of the county is now in the High and Very High severity zones than in the 2007 map.

The map is specifically for areas of the state that are in “state responsibility areas.” It does not cover “local responsibility areas” - in our county that means the City of Placerville, South Lake Tahoe, and parts of Cameron Park and El Dorado Hills are not included. Maps for those areas are still being updated.

The new map also does not cover federal lands, such as Eldorado National Forest, which shows as unmapped.

Wildfire Plan (cont.)

Leading the planning effort is the County Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience (OWPR- colloquially pronounced “O-Wopper”), with help from a steering committee of fire professionals, county employees, Resource Conservation District (RCD) and EDCFSC (represented by Tamara Johnston).

A much larger stakeholder group will also be engaged to share their expertise and concerns, including utilities, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), the SOFAR collaborative, and the California Dept. of Conservation’s “Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program”

First Step- Risk/Hazard Analysis

A contractor with excellent experience in wildfire plan development has been selected (Jensen Hughes) and will start the process by analyzing the West Slope wildfire hazards and risks. They will use sophisticated fire behavior models, info from preexisting plans (see the list of the many state, federal, and county plans that exist or are being created on last page of this issue), including EDCFSC’s existing 2022 CWPP.

Once this initial analysis is done - showing where and what our major hazards and risks are - they will begin engaging with the public and FSCs to seek feedback, validate data, and fine tune their analysis.

Public Input

To hear from residents and business owners, workshops will be held in various areas around the county, anticipated to begin in late summer or early Fall. In addition, Tom Meyer of OWPR has started meeting after

Wildfire Plan (cont)

monthly EDCFSC board meetings with any FSC leaders who wish, to get feedback on the process and to stay in tune with local FSC needs.



May 15 FSC meeting with Tom Meyer

The upshot: there is a huge, coordinated planning effort afoot to make El Dorado County more wildfire resilient! This could ultimately help insurance rates as well.

The hope is that input will be received from all areas of the West Slope, including those not currently part of an associate FSC. Watch for workshop announcements and share them with your communities!

New “Perimeter” Evacuation Website

The El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services (OES) has provided a new website to be used when wildfires are near. This is in addition to RAVE - the alert system that actually **contacts you** during a wildfire. ([Sign up for RAVE here](#))



The “Perimeter” website is instead one you **go to yourself**, to see what sections of the community are under an evacuation order, what sections are under an evacuation warning, and where evacuation routes are out of those areas. By enabling your location on the map, you can see if you are in such an evacuation area. You can also see things such as emergency shelters and road closures.

“Perimeter” has broken down El Dorado County into zones which are visible on the map. [Explore the site now and learn your zone.](#)



Walls: Home Hardening Spotlight



Although home hardening is never required of existing homes, it is a critical step to protecting them from wildfire. 60 - 95% of homes destroyed by wildfire actually catch fire from embers, which can fly right over our nice defensible space.

Walls present a large flat surface to bombardment by thousands of those embers, which can be as big as a 2 foot flaming branch. The embers hit walls and fall, accumulating in a dangerous burning pile of debris at the wall's base. This can occur below the main walls, but also at the intersection of walls and decks/patios, and dormer walls and roofs. Fire that starts at the wall base can then climb up and even into the wall. For this reason, it is recommended that we address the flammability of our siding - though there is a confusing array of advice.

- At a minimum, the bottom **6 inches** should be noncombustible. Many county residents have gotten letters from their insurance company requiring this, and it is recommended by California's "Safer from Wildfire" and the "Wildfire Prepared Home" insurance websites.
- If you want to be still safer, replace the **bottom 2 feet** of wall with something non-combustible, as recommended by NIST 2205, Table A, Appendix A, (the "gold standard" for home hardening retrofits, by CAL FIRE, IBHS, and NIST.)
- If you are in a particularly vulnerable spot (such as at the head of a canyon) you may want to replace **all of your siding** with noncombustible siding. CAL FIRE- Ready for Wildfire- suggests this when you re-side. This can be very expensive when done solely for fire resistance.



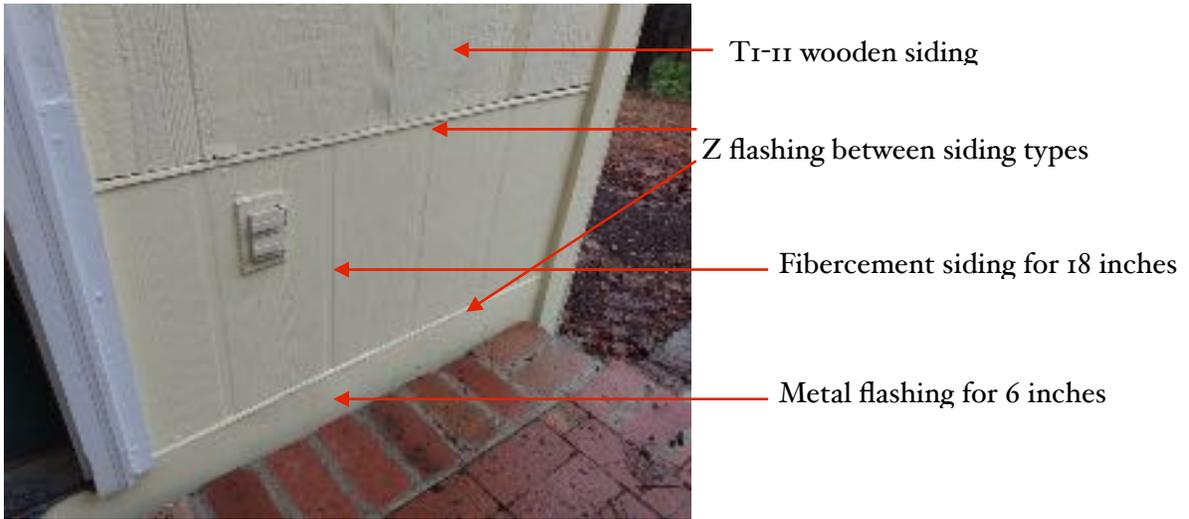
New siding can often go right over old siding, if the wall is sound. A vapor barrier is generally used between the two layers. Pay attention to the bottom of the wall however - metal flashing needs to go over the old, combustible siding where it is still exposed at the bottom. (NIST 2205 Table A Appendix A recommendation)

New fiber cement siding over old wood siding



One homeowner's method of protecting bottom of old wood combustible siding with metal flashing.. Consult a contractor for your situation.

Adding 6 inches of metal flashing and 18 inches of fibercement siding to make 2 ft. at patio intersection



Use metal flashing between siding types to prevent water damage, as in this example from one homeowner. Consult with a contractor for your own situation.

Common noncombustible siding options:



3 coat stucco



Fibercement panels/planks



Exposed concrete foundation



Brick or stone veneer



What about asbestos siding, which many older homes were sided with up until about 50 years ago (when it was banned in the U.S. for health reasons)? Asbestos siding can be quite fire and heat resistant. The problem is in the gaps. Older siding such as this often develops cracks and openings as shingles shift and move. Such gaps need to be carefully filled to prevent embers entering and igniting the building. (No gaps larger than 1/8 inch should remain)

This is true for ALL siding types.
Gaps need to be caulked so that none larger than 1/8 inch remain

Fire Safe Council Doings - fuel reduction inspiration

Greenwaste Dumpster Days are happening around the county sponsored by various Associate Fire Safe Councils, giving residents an easy option for disposing of large amounts of defensible space green waste. Several FSCs have also been focusing on reducing roadside vegetation, especially along routes that are likely to be needed during evacuation. Good access is an important feature of good wildfire preparation!

1. Gallagher Road Landowners Association Fire Safe Council and Firewise Community - big project for small group

This small Fire Safe Council of just 51 homes took on a big project - improving roadside vegetation along a main evacuation route. 8 volunteers heeded the call, and in just 4+ hours of focused work were able to have a big impact. Raising tree canopies to 15 feet above the road and thinning out

roadside vegetation, the residents removed a whopping 15 dump truck and 12 pickup loads of green waste- for a total of 280 cubic yards of wood, brush, and cuttings removed! They can rest easier knowing this important evacuation route is safer now.



2. Coloma-Lotus FSC grant work, and door to door ROE requests

Roadside hazardous fuel reduction along 18 roads is well under way (about 75% complete already) thanks to a \$705K grant received from CAL FIRE back in 2022. The FSC chair and grant writer have been meeting every other week with the Resource Conservation District (RCD) who is managing the project. Volunteer FSC “road ambassadors” went door to door in their neighborhoods explaining the project and obtaining Right of Entry (ROE) forms. Over 70% of affected residents agreed to the work being done on their property, making the roads safer for the whole community.

3. South County grant work, 6 FSC project out to bid

This large fuel reduction project in 6 partnering FSCs is on the verge of finally starting after almost two years of bi-weekly meetings with volunteers and RCD (project manager). Obtaining Right of Entries has been a surprisingly difficult task, but the project is finally out for contractor bids. The project is being funded by a \$2 million grant from CAL FIRE.

4. Georgetown Divide FSC - grant money used for fuel reduction, but also planning for future fuel reduction projects

This very large Fire Safe Council (the largest FSC on the West Slope) is in the midst of grant funded* roadside fuel reduction and shaded fuel break projects, but also, as a somewhat unique feature, using some of their grant money to plan future fuel reduction projects. The planning they built into the grant includes environmental analysis to conform to CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act)

In line with the planning effort, an environmental contractor was hired to identify sensitive biological and cultural resources, as well as other environmental issues (such as invasive plants) for potential future fuel reduction projects in the Garden Valley area of the FSC. Wildfire modeling was also performed to identify areas of greatest risk. A community meeting was then held in March to get community input at the get-go: to explain possible projects, the work of the Georgetown Divide FSC, fire history for the area, etc. and hear from residents as to where they thought priorities should be. 100 Garden Valley residents attended (of a total of roughly 2,000), after local social media notices,

Fire Safe Council Doings- fuel reduction inspiration (cont.)

newspaper articles in Mt. Democrat and Georgetown Gazette, a banner at a prominent park, physical flyers, and partnering with local groups to get the message out (such as the local fire dept. Grange, and Water Utility District). This type of early planning and community engagement will now guide projects for which grant funds are sought in the future - which will likely focus on areas identified by the attendees (hopefully making right of entry forms less cumbersome to obtain).

*Several grants are funding these projects- \$5 million from CAL FIRE, \$1 million from BLM, and \$94K from the California Fire Safe Council (our state umbrella FSC).



Before and after for one of Georgetown Divide FSC's completed roadside fuel reduction projects.

Welcome

Serrano
Fire Safe
Council !

our 32nd
associate FSC



Pile Burning Update:

- Permit is needed as of May 1, [apply here](#)
- Must be done on burn day, in piles 4 ft. diameter max, with 10 ft. clearance, and water available.
- Burn barrels prohibited as always
- [View CAL FIRE burning information](#), including burning alternatives - consider disposing of slash a different way!

Upcoming Webinars of interest

UCANR (Univ. of Calif. Agriculture and Natural Resources)

Part 1: Ranch Hardening and Wildfire Preparedness Strategies for Agricultural Structures

- **Date & Time:** May 21, 2024 from 6:00 - 7:00 PM PST
- **Description:** Join UCCE Fire Advisor, Luca Carmignani and Forest Advisor, Yana Valachovic, for an engaging discussion about best practices for incorporating principles of structure hardening and defensible space into agricultural structures and operations. *This is a virtual webinar.*
- **Register Here by May 20th:** <https://bit.ly/3y1MbuP>

Part 2: The Realities of Managing Livestock Health During Wildfire

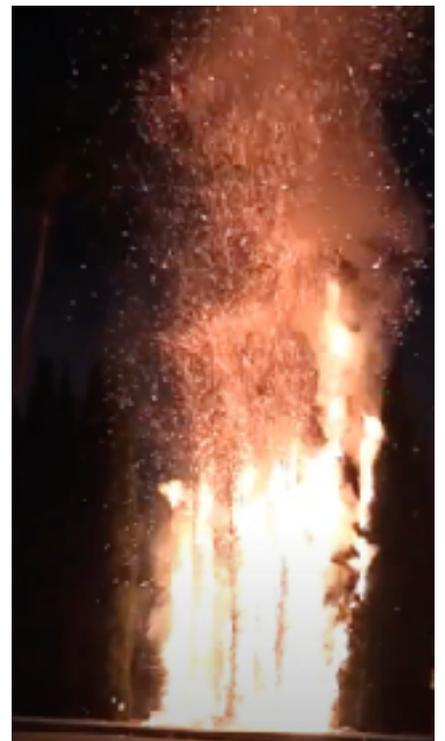
- **Date & Time:** May 28, 2024 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM PST
- **Description:** Join UCCE Livestock and Natural Resource Advisors and our partners for a set of presentations about managing livestock health during wildfire events and what to do if you find yourself trapped by an approaching wildfire. *This is a virtual webinar.*
- **Register Here by May 20th:** <https://bit.ly/3y1MbuP>

How Can We Assess Plant Flammability?

- **Date & Time:** June 5, 2024 from 3:00 - 3:45 PM PST
- **Register Here by June 4th:** <https://bit.ly/3Wetr1A>

Nuances in Fire History and Management: Lessons from Oregon

- **Date & Time:** June 12, 2024 from 12:00 - 12:45 PM PST
- **Register Here by May 20th:** <https://bit.ly/44fMU7u>



Highly flammable Italian cypress

Other plans being looked at as part of new county Wildfire Plan development:

The new CWPP (see article on page 1-3) seeks to connect and use information from all the various **area** plans that already exist or are being created/updated. These are (including live links):

- [CAL FIRE's updated Strategic Fire Plan for Amador and El Dorado Unit](#)
- [South Fork American River \(SOFAR\) Cohesive Strategy](#) - a collaboration of El-dorado National Forest, private landowners, and many interested entities
- [Community Wildfire Protection Plans \(CWPPs\)](#) - updated by EDCFSC and its associate FSCs in 2022, currently being updated
- [El Dorado County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) - includes home hardening retrofit mitigation, roadside clearance, backup emergency operations center, and critical facility protection
- [El Dorado County General Plan Safety Element update](#) - evacuation focus

The Wildfire Plan is also working to connect/use information from broader area **state and federal** plans such as:

- [California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#) - comprehensive statewide strategy of the Governor's Forest Management Task Force
- [CAL FIRE's Statewide Strategic Plan, 2024 update](#) - updated roughly every 5 years
- [U.S. Forest Service's Wildfire Crisis Implementation Plan](#) - 10-year national plan of 2022, focusing on the Western states.