



Nevada County



FIREWISE NEWS

Grass Valley & Nevada City, California

Vol. 3, No. 1 Winter, 2019

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CLEAR VACANT LAND? AND HOW CAN IT BE ACCOMPLISHED?

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One of the most frequently asked questions Fire Officials receive today is, “What can I do to protect my house from wildfire?” There are numerous agencies around the county, (i.e. local Fire Stations, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, and Nevada County Office of Emergency Services) and Internet websites to obtain the defensible space requirements. But, the one question I rarely receive is, “What can I do with my vacant parcel of land to help protect the community?” There are large areas of land surrounding our small communities that are overgrown with vegetation. It comes down to one simple fact, out of sight – out of mind.

The owners don’t live in the immediate area and often it’s been years since they’ve seen the property. Vacant parcels of land pose a real threat when not managed correctly. The energy that could be created by the overabundance of fuel in an urban wildland interface (WUI) situation is a recipe for disaster. First and foremost, obtaining a minimum one hundred (100) feet of defensible space. If you live next to a vacant parcel and, for instance, your home is just fifty (50) feet off the property line, that leaves you short of the necessary clearance. Nevada County Ordinance 2411 gives the authority to the local fire officials to require the vacant parcel owner to clear the additional distance needed to meet the defensible space requirements of adjacent homes.

The local fire official through the Ordinance 2411 can impose requirements. These requirements can range from establishing fuel modification zones around the property boundary, up to and including creating fire breaks within the parcel. The slope of the land, improved parcels next door, and fuel types are all taken into consideration when establishing these requirements.

To start the process, a complaint must be filed with your local fire agency. An inspection is performed, and a determination is made as to what amount of vegetation removal is needed. The goals are to work with the property owner through education to gain compliance and the necessary clearance as well as thinning completed to make the whole community safer.

For a Defensible Space
Advisory Visit

Call: (530) 272-1122

www.AreYouFireSafe.com



Also, check with your local
fire department, County
OES or CAL FIRE

Sign up for Code RED
Alerts today!

[Click here](#) or call 211

In This Issue

- A Wildfire Is Coming! So What Are You Going To Do?
- Quick Notes
- Does Wildfire Mitigation Really Work?
- How Communities Can Better Prepare For Wind-Driven Wildfires



So What Are You Going Do?

By John Wetzel, Upper Rough & Rough Firewise Community

Since the Camp Fire destroyed much of the city of Paradise in Butte county and resulted in both loss of life (89 persons) and property, I've had the opportunity to listen to a variety of firefighters and other professionals describe what happened and what it might mean to you and me during the next wildfire in our neighborhood.

If you have been paying attention, you already have a Go-Bag ready to take with you if an evacuation is ordered. It is either by the door or already in your car. You have created defensible space around your house. You have signed up for the Code RED warning system and have their two numbers flagged so that their calls and texts will be received day or night, even when you have "Do Not Disturb" turned on. You may also have a phone tree established so you and your surrounding neighbors can alert each other. Maybe you have arranged with friends living one or two or five miles away to call each other when a fire occurs, and you can get a head's up about what is happening. Perhaps you have thought about one or more evacuation routes. And, maybe you've thought about the potential of sheltering in place if evacuation is not possible. There's lots of information about getting prepared for the next wildfire. You just have to take the time and decide what you and your family will do and practice so you can execute a plan quickly and hopefully successfully.

But here are a few more thoughts you might want to consider if a wildfire is suddenly in your neighborhood.

1. You need to be personally responsible for taking action to protect yourself and your family. If you have minutes in which to make a decision, county and state personal may not be able to get to you in time. Think about it!
2. If there is a wildfire in your area, are you going to wait for an evacuation order or are you going to evacuate early before it is mandatory and before the roads are clogged with vehicles? It's your choice. What are you going to do?
3. Staying behind to protect your house may sound noble, but is your life worth protecting "your things." Probably not.
4. Having a plan is really important. Having a good plan and practicing it is even better. So develop your plan and share with others. Have it critiqued by friends and be prepared to make it happen. Remember, during the Camp Fire, at times it was burning the equivalent of a football field every second. You can't out run that! And you can't hope to survive such an event if you're not prepared.

We all love Nevada County and the forest that surrounds us. It is a beautiful place to live. But I still recall an emergency worker talking about survival and his words were, "The forest doesn't care!" A wildfire will run right over you if you haven't prepared to survive it. Each of us has a responsibility to be prepared and skilled in how to survive a wildfire. If you're not already getting ready for the next fire season, you should! Be informed, have a plan and be ready to execute it.

Luck may be one way to survive a wildfire. However, following the advice of emergency services and fire professionals and knowing what you're going to do is a much better way of making you and your family's survival a reality. So get ready today!

QUICK NOTES

Winter is the perfect time to create Defensible Space

With wet soils and vegetation, wintertime is the ideal season to reduce the fuels for wildfires. The folks at Yubanet.com have created excellent feature stories on all sorts of preparations for Fire Season. Week 5 (of 25) discusses Brush Clearing and Disposal. Check it out.

Don't do the right thing in the wrong way

- In the dry months, only mow before 10 am
- During mowing, have a spotter ready to douse sparks that cause flames
- Have spark arresters on gas-powered outdoor equipment

Practice your Emergency Action Plan

Do you have your family evacuation plan and is it practiced regularly so everyone will react appropriately in an emergency? Not having to think it through during the stress of an emergency event can help everyone get safely and quickly out of harm's way. *Get 'er done.*

Does Wildfire Mitigation Really Work?

It can be a lot of work and seem expensive to create Defensible Space and harden one's home against wildfire. You might be wondering if it is really worth it?

Scientific research and field analysis has proven it all does help. "Fire resilience is about understanding and recognizing the vulnerabilities of your home and landscape, and making modifications so that the home and landscape are complementary to each other. Yes, Defensible Space is important, but equally important is the condition of the house [referring to how is it hardened against wildfire]," says Yana Valachovic of the UC Cooperative Extension Service.

Ask the Hauser family in Redding if their efforts paid off during the Carr fire last June 2018. The evidence is overwhelming. Their home survived while as many as 17 other neighboring homes did not.



Credit: Yana Valachovic, UC Coop Extension Service

The Hauser family home survived because carefully selected and thoughtfully placed landscape plants were used. Plants closest to the home were well pruned and maintained. Succulents and other fire resistant ornamentals were used, especially closest to the house. Soffited (boxed-in) eaves and overhangs were employed as were fire resistant siding and roofing. The family even provided a water source for firefighters and had it well labeled.

Similarly, the Moore's home survived the deadly Camp fire in Paradise last November 2018 because they took Defensible Space and hardening of their home very seriously and did all they could to prevent their home from being ignited by flying embers. They even had roof-mounted sprinklers fed from their water-well powered by their generator.

So while the efforts of these two families may seem extraordinary, these were mostly common sense measures that saved their homes and property from serious and/or catastrophic damage. You can do similarly, just start today with even small measures nearest to and on your home. See information at www.ReadyForWildfire.org, www.AreYouFireSafe.com and NFPA.org/Public-Education on how to do it best.

How Communities Can Better Prepare For Wind-Driven Wildfires

With the recent and most destructive fire in California's history, many are asking the hard questions and looking for answers. Firebrands (wind-driven/airborne burning embers) are well known by fire experts to be generally more of a danger for destroying homes and other structures than an approaching fire-front. Lofted firebrands fall like rain on receptive fuels — dry and stressed vegetation from years of drought as well as tall and thick grasses grown by springtime rains.



Why we are at risk:

- Heavy and concentrated fuels, steep terrain, poor access for ingress of firefighters and egress for residents (evacuation), and light flashy fuels (grass and brush).
- Population growth is highest in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) these days and that creates great potential for catastrophic life and property loss.
- Lack of preparation and training for the worst potential scenarios, not just the most likely ones. While seemingly expensive and over-the-top, saving lives and property under the most catastrophic situation is more prudent than not.

How do we prepare against wind-driven firebrands igniting structures?

- Creating and maintaining Defensible Space to at least 100 feet around each structure (even more on hillsides/slopes) that include fire resistant and well maintained landscaping, especially nearest the house.
- Hardening structures to prevent embers settling on easily ignitable areas of your home by:
 - Using only fire resistant roofing, decking and siding materials. Retrofit when possible.
 - Clearing patios and decks of flammable items when a fire is approaching.
 - Keeping undersides of decks as well as roof valleys and gutters free of pine needles, leaves and other flammable materials.
 - Utilizing 1/8 inch mesh for attic and crawl space vents.
 - Keeping firewood and other flammable piles at least 30 feet from structures and covered with fire resistant tarps.
 - Sealing open gaps of closed garage doors and windows.
 - Utilizing fire-resistant tempered window glass.