



Palo Alto Foothills Area Wildland Fire Public Safety Education

Crime | Natural Disasters | Accidents

19 August 2021

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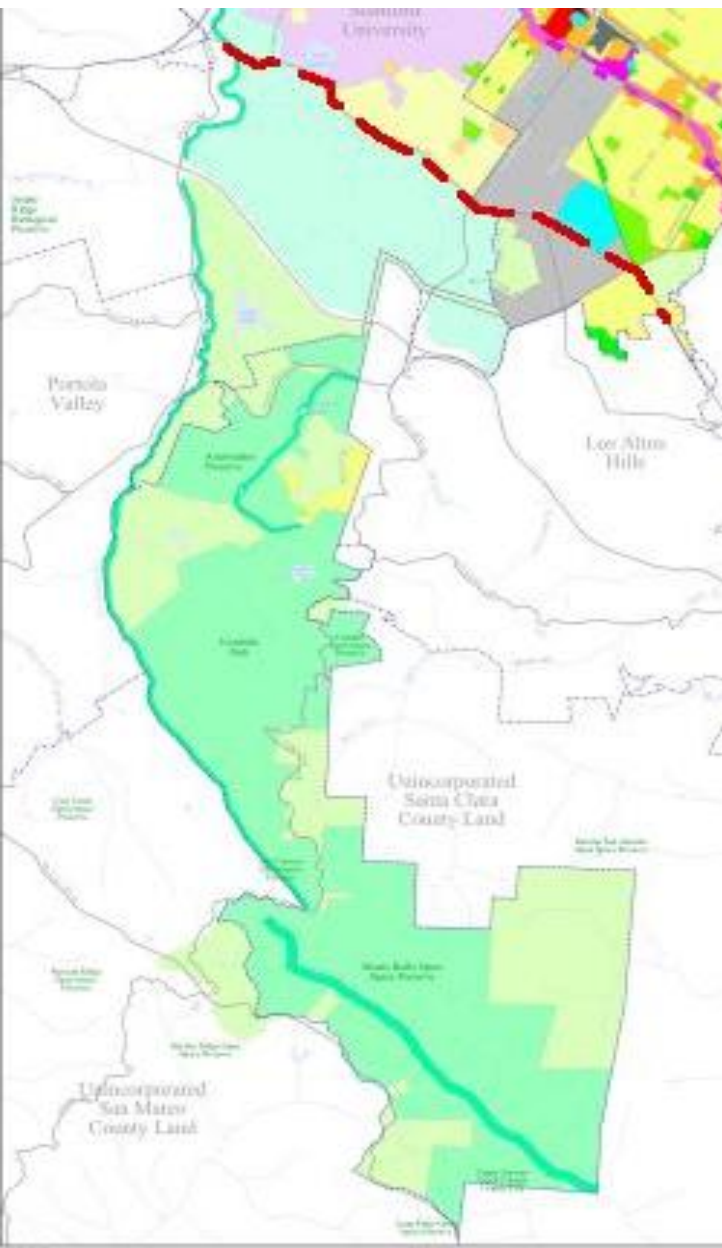
www.cityofpaloalto.org/wildfire

Learning Objectives

- Prepare Your Property: Defensible Space
- Ready-Set-Go
- Understand all hazards (not just fire) in the foothills

Agenda: Presenters

- Palo Alto Fire Deputy Chief Kevin McNally: Introduction
- Palo Alto acting Fire Marshal Steve Lindsey: Fire Inspections, Defensible Space, Public Safety Resources
- Palo Alto OES Chief Ken Dueker: Ready-Set-Go, Evacuations, and All Hazards
- Other agency representatives are also here (thank you!)
- *The presentation will take about 45 minutes, followed by Q&A (questions at the end).*



Introduction by Chief McNally

Define the “Wildland Urban Interface” (WUI):

- West of Foothill Expressway & Junipero Serra Blvd. to Skyline
- Includes Open Space & Parks – natural values
- 200+ homes in City limits & Stanford land
- Neighboring cities/towns
- Several million sq. ft of commercial buildings & business (Stanford Industrial Park)
- Infrastructure: utilities, communications

Objectives:

- Prevent/mitigate fire (ignition, spread, consequences)
- Contain fire to less than 10 acres while also evacuating you
- Coordinate limited public safety resources



Current & Predictive Fire Models

This Fire Season Is already Serious

- Drought and other risk factors are extreme
- Dixie fire is now the largest in CA state history (and this is “early” season)



Chief Lindsey: Inspections, Defensible Space



PAFD WUI Property Inspections

- Goal is compliance to reduce community risk

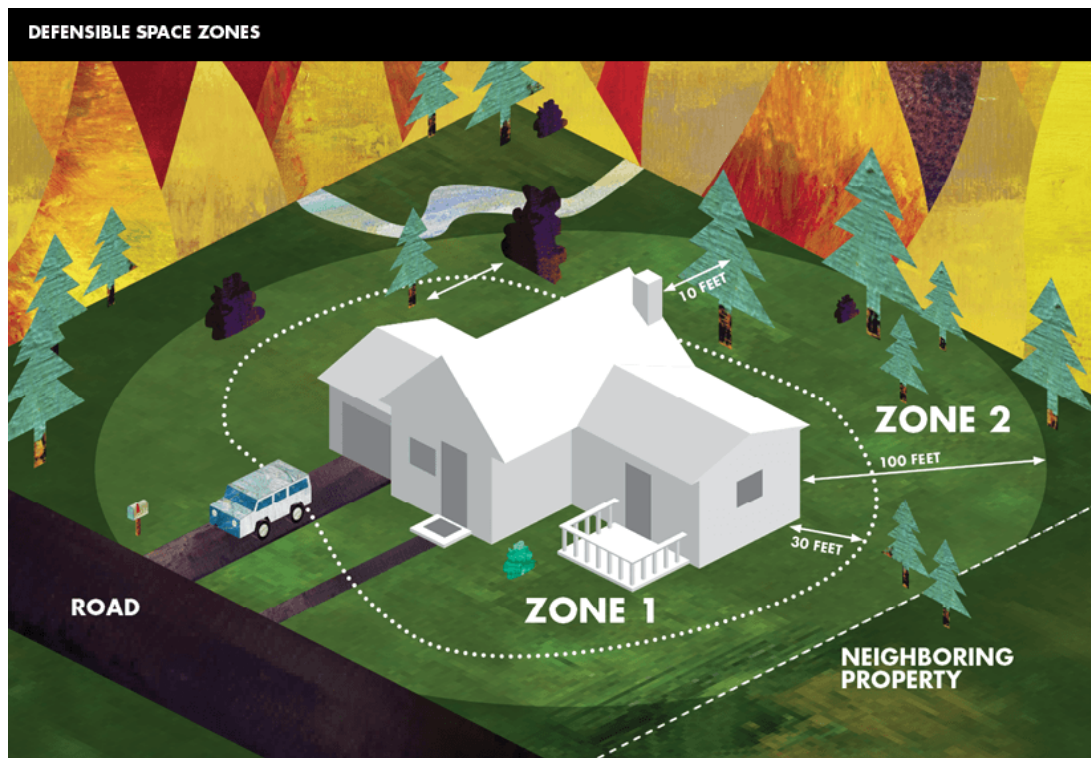
Defensible Space:

- Your legal responsibility & in your self-interest
- Don't make your home a "lost cause"
- Give firefighters better odds of saving your house or the home not igniting if no responders arrive



www.readyforwildfire.org

Understand the 100' Defensible Space Concepts



Zone 2 – Reduce Fuel Zone

- Is from 30 feet to 100 feet out from buildings, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.
- Cut grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.

Zone 1 – Lean, Clean & Green Zone

- Is 30 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.
- Remove all dead plants, leaves from yard, roof & rain gutters.
- Remove branches that hang over roof & 10 feet from chimney.



Home Hardening



Comply with Fire Code, other Laws

- Address sign clearly visible
- Driveway access
- Private water supplies

Three Ways a Building Catches Fire in WUI

- Direct Flames: fire from plants or adjacent buildings
- Radiant Heat: can crack windows, ignite furnishings
- Embers: can fly over a mile ahead of a fire, enter your vents (eaves)

Hardening Measures

- Roof: Is the most vulnerable part of your home. Upgrade to noncombustible roof materials. Remove accumulated leaves, pine needles, etc. Ditto rain gutters.
- Vents: Cover all openings with 1/16" mesh or upgrade to ember-safe vents. Box in eaves.
- Windows: Upgrade single-pane glass. Metal screens can help.
- Walls: Remodel wood exteriors with fire-proof materials such as stucco.
- Landscaping: Put in fire-wise plants and ornamentation

Public Safety Resources

A Wildland Fire will Involve Various Agencies, Disciplines

- Fire Station 8: Located in Foothills Nature Preserve (formerly Foothills Park); jointly staffed with Palo Alto and County crews. Staffed “day shift” June 15-Oct. 31; may adjust based on conditions (Red Flag)
- Rangers: Rangers are most likely to be “in the right place at the right time” from various agencies: Palo Alto CSD, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, State Parks, County Parks, State Fish & Wildlife Dept.

Examples of Agencies from the CZU Fire (right near here)

- OES: State OES, Palo Alto OES, San Mateo Co. OES, others
- CAL FIRE, California Highway Patrol (CHP), CA National Guard
- Various utilities (PG&E, Cal Water), various public works departments
- NGOs: Red Cross, faith-based organizations, charities, and so forth



Chief Dueker: Ready-Set-Go



- **READY**: Prepare defensible space around your home. Have a family disaster plan & know how to evacuate.
- **SET**: As the fire approaches, have a checklist of things you will do to protect your home & what you will bring with you.
- **GO**: Leave as soon as possible – do not get stuck on the road or block access for emergency vehicles.

Arastradero Arson Fire 8/7/12

(suspect arrested by
Palo Alto Police Dept.)

What other criminal activities put the Foothills at risk?

Ready: Prepare for All Hazards



Learn more on:

www.cityofpaloalto.org/thira

www.cityofpaloalto.org/preparedness

Wildland Fire is not the only Scenario to Plan for:

- Earthquakes
- Landslides
- Accidents, medical emergencies (weekend warriors)
- Crime – including arson

Foothills Residents Have special Planning Factors:

- Fewer first responders
- Distance between properties
- Limited roadways, access
- Communications: cell coverage
- Pets, livestock, large animals

Set: Be Aware & Stay Informed



Avail yourself of various resources:

- Register for alert and warning systems, public safety social media [see links below]
- Neighborhood communication: e-mail/text groups, NextDoor, etc.
- Watch wildfire cameras on www.alertwildfire.org
- KZSU FM 90.1 is our local emergency radio station
- Download the PulsePoint app on your phone
- “Know your zone” on community.zonehaven.com

Learn more on:

www.cityofpaloalto.org/stayinformed

San Mateo Co. www.smcalert.info

Set: Get Involved



Get trained in life-saving skills; join Emergency Services Volunteer (ESV) program:

- Take (often free) training offered by your local public safety agencies
- Join the ESV program (which is also our Neighborhood Watch crime prevention program)



Learn more on:

www.cityofpaloalto.org/emergencyvolunteers



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Set: What to Bring, What to Do

Prepare a checklist

Critical medications.

- Important personal papers, photos.
- Essential valuables.
- Pet and livestock transport, limited amount of pet food.
- Change of clothing, toiletries.
- Cell phone with charger
- Critical papers and effects in a fire-proof safe.
- An Evacuation Route Map with at least two routes.
- Drive your planned route of escape before an actual emergency.

The Evacuation Process (CAL FIRE)

1. Officials will determine the areas to be evacuated and the routes to use depending upon the fire's location, behavior, winds, terrain, etc.
2. Law enforcement agencies are typically responsible for enforcing an evacuation order. Follow their directions promptly.
3. You will be advised of potential evacuations as early as possible. You must take the initiative to stay informed and aware. Listen to your radio/TV for announcements from law enforcement and emergency personnel.
4. You may be directed to temporary assembly areas to await transfer to a safe location.

REMEMBER THE SIX "P'S"

1. People and pets
2. Papers, important documents
3. Prescriptions and eyeglasses
4. Pictures and irreplaceable memorabilia
5. Personal computer backup thumb drive (consider "cloud")
6. "Plastic" (credit cards) & cash

Go: Know when to Go

Don't Wait, Evacuate!

- If you feel at risk, leaving early or needlessly may be inconvenient, but it is the right thing to do
- P.L.E.A.S.E. = Please Leave Early And Save Everyone

Evacuation Considerations:

- Practice your plan
- Where might you go, family meeting spot
- Temporary safety zones





Know your evacuation routes – names of side streets; even hiking trails, if roads are blocked.

GO!

You may have little or no warning to evacuate. Don't wait to be told to evacuate. Authorities may not have time to order an evacuation. If you feel threatened, leave on your own initiative.

- Preparedness is better than panic.



Evacuation is the responsibility of law enforcement.

Your responsibility: DO NOT block the roads!



Shelter in Place

- ✓ Move furniture away from windows and sliding doors to keep it from igniting due to the heat of fire radiating through the windows.
- ✓ Remove your flammable curtains and drapes.
- ✓ Stay inside your house, away from outside walls.
- ✓ Close all doors, but leave them unlocked.
- ✓ Keep your entire family together and remain calm. Remember: if it gets hot inside the house, it is many times hotter and more dangerous outside.

After the fire passes:

- ✓ Check the roof immediately, extinguishing all sparks and embers.
- ✓ Check inside the attic for hidden burning embers.
- ✓ Check your yard for burning woodpiles, trees, fence posts or other materials.
- ✓ Keep the doors and windows closed.
- ✓ Continue rechecking your home and yard for burning embers for at least 12 hours.

If You Are Caught Outdoors

- Get to a fire-proof place if possible
 - 1) Get into water or 2) Lie flat near rock or concrete
- Cover head and upper body with wet fabric or soil
- Breathe air close to ground through a wet cloth to mitigate inhalation of heated air & smoke
- If driving, try not to stop at inside curve or “chute” (chimney effect)



Aftermath: Repopulation

- Public Safety authorities will advise when you are allowed to return to your home.
- Looting and opportunistic crime are unfortunate factors during and after wildfires. Other: Health hazards.



Take Action before the Disaster

- Public Safety wants the community to be our partners, not victims. Resolve to do *something*.





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