

Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc.

# Firewise Gazette

Little Valley Edition



A publication of the  
Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc.  
P.O. Box 816, Susanville, CA 96130  
[www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org](http://www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org)  
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## Shared Responsibility, Shared Successes. . . .

### Little Valley taking steps to become the next Lassen County "Firewise Community"

Community action begins with individuals accepting responsibility for their home and property. Wildfire does not recognize property lines or boundaries. Even when you do all you can to make your property Firesafe and compliant with the law, other factors may impact you. If your neighbors do not do their part maintaining their property or the roads do not have highly visible roads signage or do not allow for safe passage of emergency vehicles along with other factors could place your community at higher risk for catastrophic wildfires.

In the past in our rural communities, neighbors helped neighbors during difficult times with barn raising and other cooperative projects. Enter the Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc. (LCFSC), Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) and Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (PG&E) with their offers to assist the community of Little Valley to reduce those "other factors".

Due to the interest of local Little Valley community members and the recognition of the extreme wildfire hazard associated within this community the LCFSC along with the entire partnership associated with the Lassen County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) determined the need to address this rural community which became a high priority community at risk to the planning group.

The LCFSC has applied for and received multiple grant funds to

provide for this hazardous fuel reduction project and has joined forces with SNC and SPI to perform significant fuel reduction treatment activity in and around the community. Once word of this project reached PG&E,



they expressed interest in joining in to provide additional funding to support the project. The LCFSC will provide assistance to those home and property owners living within the area in removal of hazardous trees and vegetation around their homes.

The LCFSC is challenging the Little Valley Community residents and property owners in reviving the spirit of community responsibility by joining their efforts in reducing the wildfire risk within this community. The project begins with the signing up of larger land owners in order to meet our grant requirements regarding the need for significant acreage for treatment. The smaller parcels will then be assessed and offered our assistance to join in the project. We are looking for 100 percent of property owners to

sign up for treatment of their property allowing the LCFSC to remove trees that are deemed hazardous and opening up the tree crown sufficiently to provide for the possibility of wildfire survivability should such an event occur. In doing this you are also helping your neighbors by becoming a solution to the problem.

Due to the significant costs associated with a project of this magnitude the LCFSC has applied for several grants to pay for the removal of the identified hazardous fuels. A grant in the amount of \$260,870 was received from the California Fire Safe Council, who acts as the grant provider for USFS funds\* in the State. An additional \$349,800 was received from the



SNC with PG&E providing an additional \$105,275. A combined total of funds received for the project comes to \$715,945. Funding of this amount will allow us to to perform real meaningful work in this community. LCFSC is applying for additional funds to complete the Project.

\* "Funding provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the Cooperative Fire Program of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Pacific Southwest Region, through the California Fire Safe Council."

## Little Valley set to become the Ninth Lassen County Firewise Community

On October 1, 2014 the Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc. held a community meeting at the Little Valley Community Service District Office to provide the community information on the hazardous fuels reduction project planned for the community. At the same meeting a presentation was provided to those in attendance on the National Fire Protection Association's Firewise Communities/USA program. Education Director, Dan Douglas gave an overview of what it means to become recognized and the benefits associated in taking the steps to be recognized as a Firewise Community.

The Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program is a process that empowers neighbors to work together in reducing their wildfire risk. By joining with the growing network of more than 1,028 recognized Firewise communities Little Valley will be taking action and ownership in preparing and protecting their homes against the threat of wildfire.

Using a five-step process, communities develop an action plan that guides their residential risk reduction activities, while engaging and encouraging their neighbors to become active participants in building a safer place to live. Neighborhoods throughout the United States are embracing the benefits of becoming a recognized Firewise Community.

The five steps of Firewise recognition

- Obtain a wildfire risk assessment as a written document from your State forestry agency or

fire department.

- Form a board or committee, and create an action plan based on the assessment.
- Conduct a "Firewise Day" event.
- Invest a minimum of \$2 per capita in local Firewise actions for the year.
- Submit an application to your state Firewise liaison.

At this meeting the Little Valley Firewise Board was formed. Board members include: Keith Franklin, Ted Crum, Barbara Sutton, Susan Moul, Bill Bradley and Bob Gordon. Typically Board meetings are held

annually but can be held as often as necessary and as determined by the Board.

The Community Assessment has been completed and will be presented to the Little Valley Firewise Board for adoption along with the Action Plan. In addition, we have already conducted our annual "Firewise Day" activity as required. Once the Firewise Board adopts the Community Assessment and Action Plan, paperwork will be submitted to the State liaison for forwarding to the NFPA Firewise Communities/USA program headquartered in Quincy, Massachusetts for final approval. Once approved Little Valley will be recognized as a member of the National Firewise Communities/USA family.

## PG&E provides support for Little Valley Hazardous Fuel Treatment Project

In appreciation and in partnership with the hazardous fuel removal work being conducted by the Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc., within and around the community Pacific Gas & Electric Company has joined

in and provided additional funding in the amount of \$105,275 in order



to increase the amount of acres that we are able to have treated for hazardous fuels removal in the Little Valley Community.



# Pictorial of Little Valley Hazardous Fuels Project Before and After Treatments



NOR 145 - Before Treatment



NOR 145 - After Treatment



NOR 145 - Before Treatment



NOR 145 - After Treatment



NOR 145 - Before Treatment



NOR 145 - After Treatment

# Little Valley Project Before and After Treatments *(Continued)*



NOR 145 - Before Treatment



NOR 145 - After Treatment



Completed Treatments Within and Around Power Line Corridor



Completed Treatments Within and Around Power Line Corridor



Hand Crew Work



Hand Crew Work

# New Wildfire Science Shows That Small Steps Can Save Homes, Communities

Filled gutters, open doggy doors can be deadly.

*When a wildfire swept through 2,000 acres in the hills north of San Diego, California, in May, it left behind a curious checkerboard of destruction. One neighborhood was reduced to ashes and twisted metal. But houses nearby suffered little more than scorched grass and singed trees.*

Captain Richard Cordova of the state firefighting agency, Cal Fire, visited the scene and quickly hit on one explanation for the fire's apparent favoritism.

Many of the homes that survived had little flammable brush in the area immediately around them. But others had dry grass and shrubs within feet of the walls. "Those were the ones that unfortunately did burn down," Cordova said.

As the summer wildfire season enters full swing in the United States, with more than 700,000 acres now burning in the Pacific Northwest and California, the difference between a surviving house and a charred husk could come down to details as small as screens over attic vents, trimmed trees, or pine needles in the gutters.

In fact, in the past ten years scientists have gained a whole new understanding of factors that can help a home survive a wildfire. And it turns out that saving a house has less to do with stopping a forest fire cold or creating a nonflammable moonscape for a hundred feet in every direction. It's more about lots of minor modifications and regular maintenance.

"It's the little things," said Michele Steinberg of the National Fire Protection Association, whose Firewise program works to educate American homeowners and communities about protecting themselves from wildfires. "That's the surprising fact for folks. I'm thinking I have to chop down every tree in the forest to protect my home, but what's really going to get me is the mulch up against the house or the

doggy door that isn't sealed."

As wildfires grow bigger and more intense—the product of drought, disease, climate change, and buildup of flammable material from decades of extinguishing nearly all fires—and annual federal spending on firefighting surpasses one billion dollars, the new science of fireproofing has some experts asking if federal, state, and local agencies should be steering more money toward making homes and communities fire resistant.

## Evolving Science of Fireproofing

For Steve Quarles, the new thinking on fireproofing crystallized in 2003, when he was sifting through ashes from the massive Cedar Fire in southern California. The blaze destroyed 2,200 homes, killed 15 people, and helped introduce the term "fire siege" into the local lexicon. Then a scientist at the University of California who was studying what happened to structures in wildfires, Quarles found green bushes and blooming flowers next to houses reduced to cinders. How would a fire leave such an odd pattern?

He went looking for a culprit that could set a house on fire without torching everything around it. He found it in tiny embers, or firebrands, as they are known among wildfire scientists. Blown far from a wildfire by the wind,

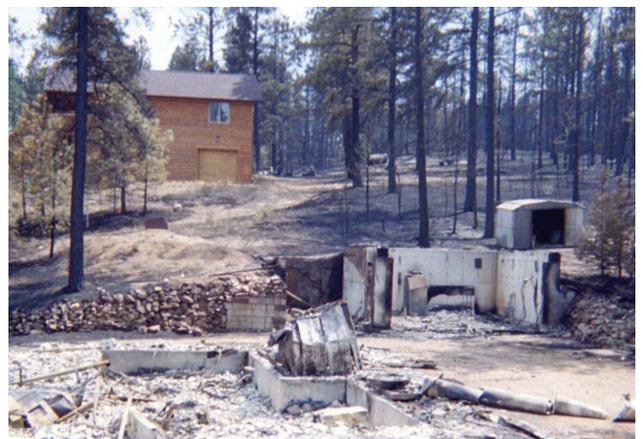


Scientists have learned more about how to keep homes safe from wildfires. During 2007's Slide fire, firefighters decided conditions were too dangerous to defend this home in Running Springs, California.

Photograph by Mark Thiessen, National Geographic Creative

these bits of burning debris can wreak havoc if they collect in flammable spots around a house: a gutter filled with pine needles, an unscreened vent leading into an attic, or a trash can left open against a wall.

That's different from an older belief—one still widely held by the public—that a wildfire's dramatic, towering flames march through a neighborhood, incinerating buildings in their path. Earlier scientific research into home destruction during wildfires had focused on how close a sustained fire,



like a burning bush, needed to be to a home to set it ablaze.

But firebrands can shower a house that's situated a quarter mile or more

## ***New Wildfire Science*** (Continued)

from a wildfire. So they've become a central focus for Quarles, who now spends his days searching for the chinks in a house's armor as a senior scientist at the insurance industry-funded Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety.

At a massive wind tunnel laboratory in South Carolina, he tries to set houses on fire. To figure out where firebrands cause the most problems, he builds small fires in a series of metal barrels, then lets a fan blow the firebrands onto a full-size house built inside the wind tunnel.

### **Fight Fire With Fire**

So far, government spending on making homes more fire resistant has lagged far behind the amount ex-

pendent on fighting wildfires. In 2013 the U.S. Forest Service spent more than \$1.3 billion putting out fires. It spent just \$2.6 million helping communities adapt to fire, and doled out an additional \$24 million to states for similar programs and for clearing fire-prone forests.

The sharp funding imbalance frustrates Jack Cohen, a Forest Service scientist and one of the leading experts on wildfires and houses. The fear of forest fires consuming homes has helped drive decades of costly efforts to squelch nearly every blaze, he said. That policy has denied forests the natural fires that helped shape the landscape for eons. One result: forests cluttered with dead or overcrowded timber that feed huge, intense fires.

Rather than focusing so much on putting out fires, Cohen said, attention should be paid to creating communities that can pass through a fire relatively unscathed. That would mean looking at the area right around houses, and at the structures themselves.

Cohen has repeatedly been called to the scene after a wildfire destroys homes around the West, to help figure out what happened. It nearly always comes down to homes and neighborhoods that weren't built or maintained to weather a fire.

"Basically, it's time to admit that there are going to be fires that we can't deal with, and ... we need to be compatible and not controlling," he said. "This is a home ignition problem, not a wildfire problem."

## ***Hardening the Home***

Each year more families move into what is called the wildland-urban interface: zones where human habitation meets forests or grasslands. Many wildfires start in such places; under the right conditions, flames or embers can easily spread to nearby homes. Fortunately, there are ways to make a house in those zones less vulnerable to fire, from the choice of building materials to the landscaping decisions. More information is available at [lassenfiresafecouncil.org](http://lassenfiresafecouncil.org) or [firewise.org](http://firewise.org).

### **1. Improve the Roof**

Fire-resistant ceramic tiles, slate or composition shingles, and metal sheets provide better protection than wood.

### **2. Seal Off Openings**

Put metal screens over vents and other openings to block embers from entering the home.

### **3. Prune Branches**

Flames can jump from branches hanging over the roof of the house. Make sure no branches are within 10 feet of chimneys

### **4. Keep lawn and /or weeds mowed**

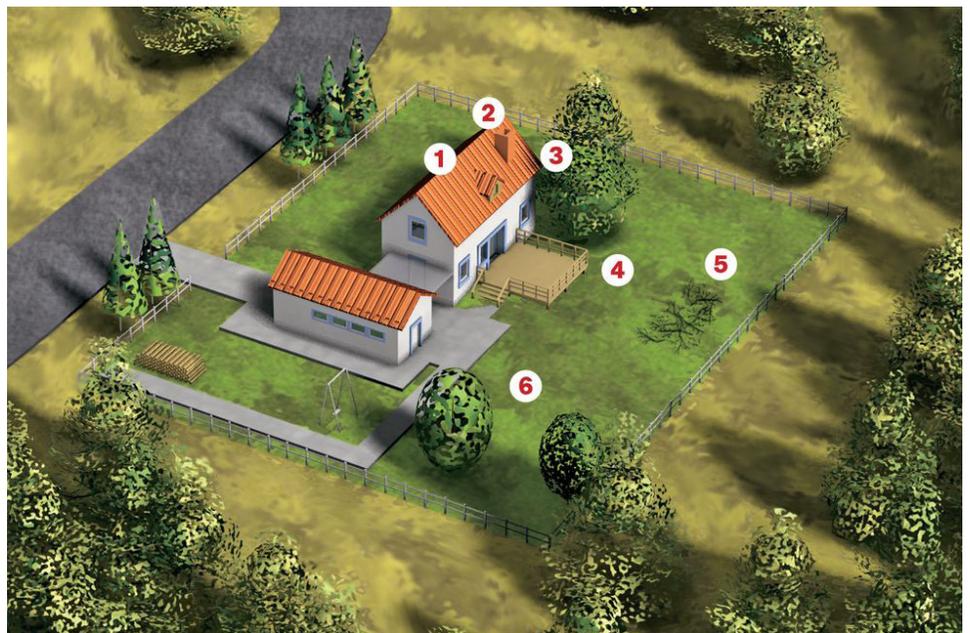
Keep grass short and well watered to hinder the spread of flames.

### **5. Pick Up Debris**

Remove leaf litter and pine needles from gutters, dead limbs from around the house. Insure firefighters have access around home.

### **6. Lighten Landscaping**

Spacing out trees and shrubs makes it harder for flames to travel and easier for firefighters to work.



*art: mika grondahl*



# CAN THEY FIND YOU?

## Have YOU Updated Your House Number?



Have you purchased and installed your house number sign yet?

The Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc. is concerned with you and your family's well being. That being said, we would like to encourage you to install new house number signs that will enable first responders to be able to find you in case of an emergency call.

While we certainly do understand that people like to express their "individuality" with regard to their homes decor, some of these personal house number designs are made of materials which do not lend themselves to providing good visibility should a person or emergency responder come looking for them in an emergency situation. In some cases, some have chosen to not number their home at all which could lead to devastating consequences.

Our "Can They Find You" house number sign project was developed over many years and after multiple meetings with your local volunteer fire departments, emergency service agencies, Lassen County Fire Chief's Association, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, CalFire prevention offices, and concerned citizens regarding the ability of our local emergency service agencies to find homes when people call for their services.

Many Lassen County homes have proper house numbers already in place but there are countless others that do not. In order for emergency service personnel to find you they must have a way of distinguishing between homes. California Public Safety Code 4291 requires home identification. The Lassen County Building Ordinance requires a minimum 4" size number placed on a contrasting background. With this in mind, the Lassen

County Fire Safe Council, Inc. along with the previously mentioned agencies recommend and require the reflective blue background with 4" white reflective numbers. This contrasting sign design provides for maximum visibility in all situations but does not conflict with any other typical street

name sign colors.

The material for these signs are made of highly reflective engineers grade material which allows for excellent night visibility under all conditions whether there is fog or smoke from a wildfire present.

### PROPERLY LOCATING THE HOUSE NUMBER SIGNS

The recommended procedure in properly signing your home location is to install your house number sign at the entrance of your driveway. This sign must be printed on both sides so the sign can be read from either direction when approach-

ing your driveway. The number orientation would be in a vertical alignment (*see example on this page*).

### MOUNTING THE HOUSE NUMBER SIGNS

Mount you sign onto a 4" X 4" pressure treated, or redwood post, or 2" round or 1½" X 1½" galvanizd steel post 10 to 12 foot long set into the ground at least 2 feet. It is recommended that you secure the sign to the post using a minimum of 4 small

1" x 1" L shaped brackets spaced evenly apart up the length of the sign and securing to the post using 1½ inch long wood screws then using 4, ¾" long 3/8" galvanized nuts and bolts with lock washers. Another example of mounting the sign is shown in the picture below. To secure the post in the ground dig a small diameter hole double the width of the post down 24" into the ground. Use scrap 2" x 4"s to hold the post "plumb" then pour concrete mix into the hole surrounding the post and let cure 24 hours. Once post is solid you can remove the 2 x 4 bracing, paint the post if you wish and then install the sign. After completing all the recommended steps you can then rest knowing that you and your family will be able to enjoy peace

of mind in knowing that if you should ever need to call for emergency assistance, that those responding WILL be able to locate you quickly when minutes and even seconds can make the difference.

### WHERE CAN I GET THESE SIGNS?

The signs are made to order. They can be obtained locally through your local fire department, LASCO or Customer Talk in Susanville. However there may be other local businesses that can

help you with the signs as well. In addition, you may even find a vendor by checking on-line but please make sure you visit our website [www.lassenfire-safecouncil.org](http://www.lassenfire-safecouncil.org) for detailed specifications for making the signs correctly.



Example of vertical house number sign mounting at entrance to homeowner's driveway.

# Creating defensible space to protect against wildfires: your home, your responsibility

By Ed Smith, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension - Living with Fire Program

When it comes to wildfire, Lassen County is confronted with a dire prediction: fires are forecast to burn more frequently and more intensely in the future. Recent and ongoing fires in Colorado and Arizona show how uncontrollably a wildfire can burn through a community. And how dangerous and deadly they can be for firefighters, as the recent tragedy in Modoc County and in Arizona has shown.

The good news is a community in a wildfire-prone area can be designed and maintained to survive wildfire, even with little or no firefighter assistance. These neighborhoods are called Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) and during a wildfire they reduce the potential for loss of life and injury, minimize damage to homes, land and infrastructure, and reduce firefighting costs.

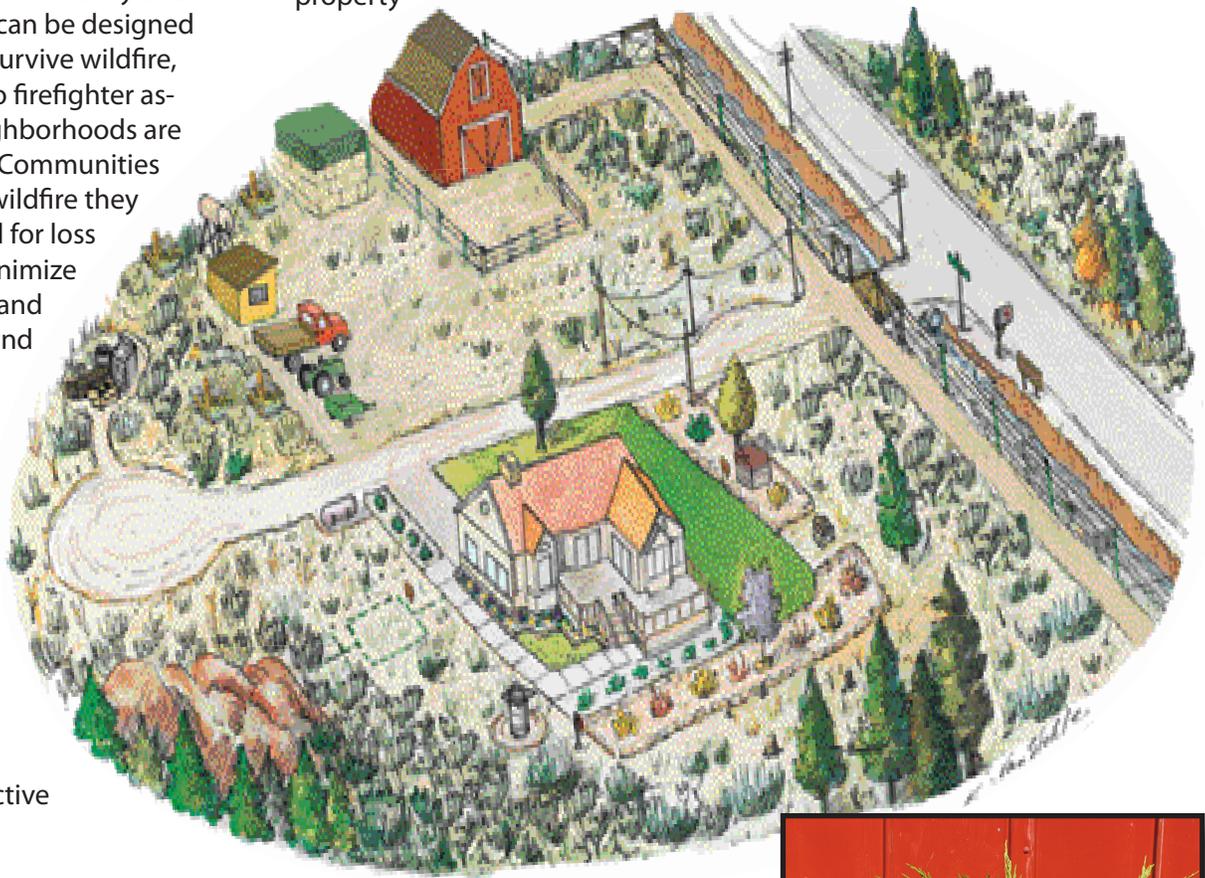
There are five critical elements of a FAC:

- Creating areas that provide community protection
- Establishing effective defensible space
- Providing adequate access
- Using appropriate building materials and maintenance techniques
- Preparing for evacuation

It's particularly important that residents learn how create effective defensible space and then maintain it.

Creating an effective defensible space serves critical functions like:

- Making fires less likely to start when burning embers are swirling about
- Decreasing flame lengths, which can prevent fire from traveling into tree canopies
- Shortening the amount of time a fire burns on your property



Dry fuels, a windy day and an ignition source could produce catastrophic conditions for many local communities. There are some factors homeowners cannot control when a wildfire starts, but as a homeowner you own the fuels on your property and by creating defensible space, you can change how fire behaves as it approaches your home.

For more information on FACs and defensible space visit the Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc. website at [www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org](http://www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org) or the Living With Fire Program website at [www.LivingWithFire.org](http://www.LivingWithFire.org)

Defensible space has been attributed to many homes surviving recent wildfires and as most homeowners find out, an effective defensible space doesn't have to mean creating a large expanse of bare ground around your home. The property can still look appealing, while creating a safer area in which to defend the home.



Make sure that you choose the right plant for planting around your home. For assistance in choosing the right plants visit our website at [www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org](http://www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org) for a copy of our landscaping plant guide.

# ONE LESS SPARK ONE LESS wildfire

## Caused by Vehicles

### Safe Towing

Dragging safety chains will throw sparks. Never substitute parts when towing. Only use appropriate safety pins & hitch ball.



### Nothing Dragging

Make sure your vehicle is properly maintained, with nothing dragging on the ground.



### Be Wheel Safe

Check tire pressure. Driving on an exposed wheel rim throws sparks.



### Maintain Vehicle Brakes

Never let your brake pads wear too thin. Metal on metal creates sparks.



### Careless Park Causes Spark

Vehicles parked too closely to dry vegetation can start fires.



## Caused by Property Owners

### Use the Right Equipment

Use string vegetation trimmers to cut tall dry grasses.



### Remove Rocks

Remove rocks from dry grass or weeds. Metal mower blades hitting rocks start wildfires.



### Be Ready!

Have water and a fire extinguisher readily available.



### Chainsaw Spark

Ensure chainsaws and other equipment have approved spark arrestors. Have a fire extinguisher ready.



### Cutting, Welding, and Grinding

Grind, sharpen, and weld on a paved enclosed area.



## Report All Fires CALL 9-1-1

Report location, what is burning, how fast it is moving, how tall are the flames, what is in danger, AND *Stay on the Phone* unless told by 911 personnel to disconnect.



**Only YOU can  
Prevent  
Wildfires!**



Have water and/or a Fire Extinguisher in your vehicle and/or outside with you while working and Learn How to Use Them.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FIRE PREPAREDNESS, VISIT

**[www.PreventWildfireCA.org](http://www.PreventWildfireCA.org) or [www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org](http://www.lassenfiresafecouncil.org)**

California Wildfire Coordinating Group



## “Fighting the Fire Before it Starts” *Written by the RGJ Editorial Board*

At issue: defensible space on private land.

Research from the Pacific Biodiversity Institute cited that “Most of the 569 buildings in Yarnell did not have buffer zones around them cleared of chaparral, shrubs and trees.” Researchers using satellite images and mapping software found that only 63 of the town’s buildings had defensible spaces around them, and 95 percent of those buildings survived the fire. A closer look at the institute’s numbers provides clear-cut evidence of the importance of defensible space.

The institute found that:

- \* More than 68 percent of the burned area in the Yarnell Hill Fire in Arizona was on private land.
- \* Almost 90 percent of the homes and other structures appeared to be in direct contact with trees or shrubs.
- \* At most, just 5 percent of the structures marked as potentially firesafe actually burned. This compares with structures the group had identified as not firesafe, which did burn.

“The contrast between these two structure survival rates is substantial and

illustrates that simple and inexpensive measures, like keeping flammable vegetation away from homes, can have a real impact on the ability of a home to survive a wildfire,” the institute said in its report. “Preventing fire tragedies in the future demands fire-adapted communities. Tragedies like the Yarnell Hill Fire are preventable. There are simple things homeowners can do to avoid having fires burn into our communities and homes and to prevent firefighter deaths.”

When homeowners are not diligent about keeping their properties firesafe, firefighters can end up paying the price with their lives.

“If all the communities across the Western United States had a priority on defensible space, if they were taking care of the property, we wouldn’t have to put firefighters between homes,” Darrell Willis, chief of the Prescott, Ariz. wildland firefighting division, told The Wall Street Journal.

The National Fire Protection Associa-



tion correctly notes that preventing wildfires is something that entire communities can get involved with.

“Many projects including senior assistance, replacing wood shake shingle roofs, community clean up and chipping days, art contests for children, roadside fuels treatments and fuel breaks and others have all enabled residents to mobilize, collaborating with their local fire jurisdictions to complete successful projects that make a difference as well as host some unique and fun educational outreach events,” the association says.

The upsurge of fire-management interest since the Yarnell Hill tragedy is an encouraging sign. It’s also a call for continued action and vigilance on the part of home- and land-owners. Ignoring the reality of wildfire

around private property can cost lives. The payoff for taking action can save lives. That is a clear choice.

For more info on making your property wildfire-defensible visit: [www.lassenfire-safecouncil.org](http://www.lassenfire-safecouncil.org)