

Fortress Firewise Association Action Plan

3-Year Community Action Plan

June 8, 2022

Introduction

Residents of Fortress Way and Fortress Court are very concerned about wildland fire due to the increasing megafires in the Sierra Nevada. Under the right conditions, a wildfire could have a major impact on this community due to fuel loading and continuity of fuels that limit safe evacuation. Some community members are working on their properties to give their homes the best chance of survival. However, lack of knowledge about how wildfires spread and significant costs and labor to reduce fuels prevent some residents from maintaining their parcels. An Action Plan to improve individual resident's safety and the community at-large could benefit the Fortress Way/Fortress Court Community in the likely event of a wildfire.

In June 2022, some residents formed a Fortress Firewise Committee and began a Firewise Community Plan to encompass all residences along Fortress Way and Fortress Court. The 2011 Pioneer/Volcano Planning Unit Conservation and Community Wildfire Protection Plan published by the Amador Fire Safe Council was used as a basis for the Plan. It was supplemented with information from the Amador Fire Safe Council, Cal Fire, Mace Meadows Firewise Plan, and an assessment by residents focusing on the general conditions of homes and related home ignition zones.

Recommendations make up the foundation of the 3-year Action Plan. The Plan identifies and prioritizes actions to reduce ignition risks to homes and facilitate rescue and safe evacuation in case of fire. The Action Plan details community wide investments along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that we will strive to complete annually or over a period of multiple years. This document will be updated every three years, or sooner if necessary. Below is a summary of the risk assessment, followed by a 3-year Action Plan.

Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary

Site Background

- The site contains approximately 67 parcels and 150 residents.
- Most parcels are between ½ and 1 acre in size.

Wildland Fire Characteristics

- Several lots at the intersection of Fortress Court and Lodestar where fuel loads could create crowning potential thereby making evacuation from Fortress Court difficult
- The site sits at the wildland urban interface with vegetation occurring in several layers: large, mature trees with partial to complete canopy closure, an understory consisting of smaller trees, discontinuous brush and timber slash, a low herbaceous cover, and a woody fuel and litter layer
- There is a large brush field that crosses lower Fortress Way approximately midway between its intersection with Fortress Court and its terminus
- Some parcels within the site boundary are undeveloped or unmaintained and contain dense, diseased, and/or downed vegetation
- On the surrounding streets of Lodestar Way and Lightning Lane, heavy fuel volumes were observed with crown closure => 70%. This fuel situation creates the potential for crowning during strong wind events such as occur during foehn flow or frontal passage
- The area within the site has no history of burning, which means it is ripe for burning

Observations

- Home building construction/ignition resistant building materials
 - **Greater than 75% of homes have metal, tile, or Class A asphalt or fiberglass shingles**
 - **Less than 25% of homes have non-combustible siding**
 - **Less than 25% of homes have skirting underneath decks**
- Attachments: wood/non-combustible materials
 - **Less than 25% of homes have NO wooden attachments**
 - **50–74% of homes have multi-paned windows**
 - **50–74% of homes have cleaned and maintained their roof and gutters**
- Immediate Zone (0 - 5 ft)
 - **Less than 25% of homes have removed vegetation and formed a combustible-free area in this zone**
 - **Greater than 75% have trees or shrubs within this zone**
 - **25-50% of homes have tree branches overhanging the roof**
 - **25-50% of homes utilize hardscaping**
 - **Less than 25% use wood mulch products**
- Intermediate Zone (5 - 30 ft)
 - **50–74% of homes have maintained grasses and broken up vegetation in small clusters**
 - **25-50% of homes have trees in this zone pruned vertically 6-10 feet**
- Extended Zone (30 - 100 ft)
 - **25–50% of homes have heavy accumulations of vegetation and debris in this zone**
 - **50-75% of homes have sheds or outbuildings that are clear of vegetation**
 - **25–50% of homes have small brush between large mature trees**
 - **Less than 25% of homes have 12 feet between canopy tops in the 30-60 foot zone**
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- Additional observations regarding site conditions:
 - Many of the homes during the assessment lacked in the basic 0-5' no-burn area
 - A correlation was found during the assessment: the homes that lacked in the 0-5' no burn zone also lacked in fuels reduction throughout the entire property
 - Address signage is non-standard, often non-reflective, and not always visible from both directions

- Drought, heatwaves, and extreme rain and snow events have impacted the health of vegetation in the neighborhood, posing a hazard to roads that are lined with tall trees and to power lines down lower Fortress Way.
- The density of ladder fuels, as well as the density and height of trees pose a risk for extreme fire behavior

Action Plan

Awareness/Education	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Educate residents about defensible space, how fires spread, the importance of the 0-5' non-combustible zone, clearing debris off the roof/gutters of structures, having visible and legible address signs that are reflective, and roadside fuels management to protect escape routes	X	X	X
Educate residents about reducing combustible materials on properties, improving storage of firewood and screens for crawl spaces/attics, and how to manage areas above and below decks	X	X	X
Encourage residents to develop a personal 3-year action plan to determine what they can do on their own and what they need assistance with	X	X	X
Notify residents of the ARCD free roadside and neighborhood chipping program	X	X	X
Notify residents on how to procure reflective address signs	X	X	X
Develop an informative welcome folder with a list of best practices, resources, and services and mail it to newly purchased properties	X	X	X
Educate residents on how to work with PG&E to report and remove trees that threaten power lines	X	X	X
Establish contact with vacation rental owners and provide documents for them to share with rental guests on maintaining fire safety	X	X	X
Host an annual event to share latest progress in community resiliency and wildfire preparedness; update assessment and action plan	X	X	X
Educate residents on which actions to take if they smell smoke or see a fire, including which tools to keep on hand during peak fire season	X	X	X
Work with fire departments to develop demonstration/lessons for safe and efficient outdoor burning	X	X	X

Signage	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Distribute yellow "EVACUATED" flags to residents for use once a residence has been evacuated	X	X	X
Install sign posts for temporary Red Flag Warning notices and other emergency messages	X	X	X
Increase percentage of homes with reflective address signs and illuminated driveways	X	X	X
Install evacuation signs, emergency lights for illumination of evacuation roads, and sirens for early warning		X	X
Inventory water sources and enhance visibility of working stand pipes	X	X	X

Communication	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Encourage residents to sign up for the CodeRED emergency alert system	X	X	X
Encourage residents to review the website regularly	X	X	X
Develop/maintain e-mail contact list of property owners	X	X	X
Utilize all available channels for communication: email, Nextdoor, Facebook	X	X	X
Develop door-to-door volunteer program to conduct targeted outreach	X	X	X
Host periodic meetings and distribute notes to keep residents informed and engaged on progress	X	X	X
Develop a website to facilitate community interaction and information sharing	X	X	X
Establish a neighborhood radio watch group and red flag warning vigilance plan		X	X
Gain awareness on rental properties and build relationships with rental owners		X	X

Fuels Reduction	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Submit project proposal to AFSC for brush field clearing	X	X	X
Identify alternative evacuation routes	X	X	X
Submit project proposal to AFSC for ingress/egress roadside clearance	X	X	X
Identify neighbors in need of assistance with fuels reduction	X	X	X
Organize a volunteer fuels reduction team to help residents complete work around their homes	X	X	X
Schedule and promote community clean-up days to encourage timely maintenance of fuels	X	X	X
Increase percentage of homes with 0-5' non-combustible zone, cleared roof/gutters	X	X	X
Seek funding for treatment of undeveloped and unmaintained swaths of forest between homes and in the 30-100' extended zone		X	X