



COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

After years of drought, Santa Clara County residents welcomed an abundance of winter and spring rains that revitalized watersheds and promoted the growth of fresh grasses and vegetation. Now, these favorable weather conditions also foreshadow dangers lurking in the summer and fall seasons when grasses, brush and vegetation dry from the heat and in hot and windy weather conditions become the fuel of wildfire dangers.

Increased numbers and severity of wildfires throughout the state since 2010 encouraged strategic approaches to prepare for and combat wildfires at the state and local levels.

The Santa Clara County Fire Department strategic efforts resulted in the 2016 Santa Clara County Community Wildfire

Protection Plan (County-CWPP), a countywide strategic plan with goals for creating a safer wildland urban interface community.

The County-CWPP identifies countywide issues and common strate-

gies and also includes sections of annexes identified for each jurisdiction to address issues and projects specific to each jurisdiction and their strategic goals.

The LAHCFD Board of Commissioners (Board) appointed a subcommittee to study, research and review Annex 4 which was written for the Los Altos Hill County Fire District (LAHCFD) by the County Fire consultants during the 2016 initiative. Annex 4 was revised, an Addendum added, and by action of the Board on June 18, 2019, these documents were adopted as the LAHCFD-CWPP.

The Addendum is written for residents and the community for education on wildfire risks and mitigation efforts. It encourages

specific pre-planning actions for resiliency of property in wildfires and for self-reliance of residents and the community in event of disaster. It is hoped the Revised Annex 4 and Addendum will encourage residents to seek additional information and become more aware of the threats of wildfire and utilize mitigation efforts. To this end, residents must prepare for the safety of their families and property as well as be concerned residents of their community. Neither the Revised Annex 4 nor the Addendum are complete or

inclusive of all the information, mitigation efforts or strategies to address the threats and realities of wildfires and disasters.

Revised Annex 4 and Addendum are designed to be dynamic documents that will be revisited and revised as fire science and wildfire experiences dictate new approaches and best practices. LAHCFD, in partnership with Santa Clara County Fire, will assess its practices and programs and makes changes in its policies to ensure continuous improvement for wildfire preparedness

Above: Town resident Dave Stewart recently applied the Ready, Set, Go training to protect his home. The trees surrounding his home were pruned back, from ground to crown, providing a defensible space. Right: The large pile of brush resulting from the pruning illustrates the reduction in fuel available to a wildfire. (Photos courtesy of Dave Stewart.)



and protection. LAHCFD-CWPP programs will be supported by the LAHCFD's budget and will engage collaboration and partnership with other stakeholders and agencies.

A community wildfire protection plan addresses four key elements: (1) identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments; (2) recommends the types and methods of treatment on that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure; (3) recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community; and (4) addresses all or some of the following issues: wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, and structure protection.

What about the future?

Wildfire is a significant risk to public health and safety, economies, infrastructure, and irreplaceable cultural and natural resources. Wildfire behavior is itself highly complex, and mitigation of its risk

requires careful and coordinated planning be done by all stakeholders.

The SCC-CWPP and the local LAHCFD-CWPP are critically important parts of an ongoing process that will enable the residents of Santa Clara County and residents in the Los Altos Hills County Fire District to address the current and future challenges of wildfire protection and preparedness efforts.

To Learn More

To learn more about wildfire preparation visit the following websites:

- LAHCFD-CWPP <https://www/lahcfd.org/>
- <https://www.sccfd.org/education-and-preparedness-overview/emergency-preparedness>
- Report to Board of Supervisors on Wildfire Risk and Response, April 2019
- Register for emergency alerts <https://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov/370/Emergency-Alerts-Register>

STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR WILDFIRE PREPARATION

There are four factors that influence the spread of wildfire. Understanding how these factors interact to produce a range of fire behavior is fundamental to determining fire prevention strategies.

1. Fuels: Fuel reduction mitigation efforts:

- remove flammable vegetation around buildings to create “defensible space” of 30 – 100 feet and reduce vegetation
- construct structures from fire-resistant material and design

Providing defensible space around structures is a mitigation effort of removing or thinning flammable vegetation. Structural mitigations include replacing wooden shake shingle roofs, wooden siding or preventing embers from entering attics through improved vent systems.

- Most structure ignite from flying embers landing on flammable components of the building and setting the building on fire or embers entering the vent systems
- Wooden roofs and wooden siding are venerable for flying ember caused fires
- Flammable vegetation ignites structures through direct flame contact
- Radiant heat from burning vegetation or other burning buildings close to the structure is another cause of fires.

2. Topography: Steepness of slope, direction the slope faces, elevation and landscape features can all affect fuels and patterns of wildfire progression.

3. Weather: As summer winds and rising temperatures dry fuels, conditions can deteriorate rapidly, creating an environment that is susceptible to wildland fire.

4. Bio-physical Factors: These factors relate to flammable vegetation, weather, topography, and road signage.

- Property hygiene is the presence of clutter, brush and debris piles, firewood stacks, lumber, or other flammables within the 100-foot defensible space zone. Good property hygiene reduces fire spread.
- Flammable vegetation, ornamental landscape can expose buildings to ignition. Many ornamental plants are very flammable especially when in flower beds with flammable wood chips and mulches which serve as a receptive bed for flying embers. Plants ignite and expose siding and under eave area to direct flame contact.
- Road Signage: Less expensive road improvements are achieved by simple actions such as posting clear road signs, evacuation routes, and addresses. These solutions can aid fire suppression efforts and reduce injury.