

An Awareness Publication from:
Grizzly Flats Fire Safe Council

Wildland Fire in our **Wildland-Urban-Interface**

Our properties are located in the **WUI** (Wildland-Urban-Interface) where we enjoy the environment of the mountain forest and all that it provides. A wildland fire would change our environment, animal habitat, our community, our properties and our lives. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent and/or manage such an event.



Photo 1 *Angora Fire, 2007*

It is not a matter of "if", but rather "when" a wildland fire will burn here. Recent and significant California wildland fires include the 2007 Angora Fire near Lake Tahoe (**Photos 1 and 2**) and the 2009 Jesusita Fire in Santa Barbara (**Photos 3 and 4**).



Photo 2 *Angora Fire, 2007*



Photo 3 *Jesusita Fire, 2009*

accidental or otherwise. Similar to these **WUI** fire damaged communities, Grizzly Flats and its surrounding area are at risk from a wildfire.



Photo 4 *Jesusita fire, 2009*

In an effort to minimize or prevent such a catastrophic event to our community, this educational publication is provided for your use. Many thanks to the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE, and the Forest Service for the use of their published information.

You are encouraged to read the Grizzly Flats Community Wildfire Protection Plan at the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC) web site (www.edcfiresafe.org). In a communication from the Pioneer Fire Protection District (PFPD) [*Grizzly Flats is within the PFPD*], the **2009 Fire**

Both wildland fires were started by humans,

Season Tip Sheet states: "The homeowner is the most important component in protecting their property. Residents have to give firefighters the space to save their houses, otherwise, there's not much we can do."

To help understand life in the **WUI**, we've provided some "lingo".

Terminology and Definitions

- **Ground Fire** - Consumes fuels close to the ground. These fuels can be dead materials such as fallen needles, cones, leaves, twigs and branches, or living fuels such as shrubs, grasses, and tree branches close to the ground. See **Photo 7**.
- **Crown Fire** - Travels through tree tops consuming live fuels. See **Photo 3**.
- **Ladder Fuels** - Flammable materials occurring between **Ground Fires** and **Crown Fires** which act as a "ladder" to either raise a ground fire to tree crowns or bring a crown fire down to the ground.
- **Tree or Shrub Canopy** - The overall diameter of the foliage head from edge to edge.

Recent History of Governmental Actions

The National Forest and other funding agencies have and are continuing to provide a buffer of fuel reduction projects around the Grizzly Flats community.

The Forest Service is scheduled to do a prescribed burn south of the community in late Fall or early winter 2009, creating a significant southerly buffer.

The purpose of a buffer is to control a wildfire's path and slow it down or stop it before it reaches the community. Several fuel reduction projects have been completed and several active projects are scheduled for completion in 2009 and 2010. Completed projects have left the forest free of under canopy fuels and have thereby significantly reduced the potential for an out-of-control crown fire.

Photo 5 shows an area of untreated dense under canopy brush and small trees. This condition exists throughout California's forest lands, including our community. These ladder fuels can introduce fire into the tree canopy where it cannot be effectively fought by fire fighters.

Photo 6 shows a treated forest area where the under canopy ladder fuels have been removed. This healthy forest environment not only provides a significantly reduced potential for a crown fire, it also offers a better habitat for the trees, forest animals and birds, not to mention ourselves.



Photo 5 Local forest needing fuel reduction treatment. The accumulation of "ladder fuels" will likely ignite the tree canopy in the event of a wildland fire.



Photo 6 Local residential forest after fuel reduction

If a wildland fire happens in a fuel reduction treated area, a ground fire is more likely to stay on the forest floor, accessible to fire fighters and/or where it can burn itself out without personal property or forest tree loss.



Photo 7 Ground fires are more accessible to fire fighters

Fire management reduces loss of the forest environment, personal property, and quite possibly lives.

Past and Current Fuel Reduction Projects by the Grizzly Flats Fire Safe Council

The Grizzly Flats Fire Safe Council was established in 2004 and has been busy making the community more "fire safe" since then. Funding of the "GF" Projects has been with grant money from a variety of sources. Past and current projects include:

- **GF-1: Primary Evacuation Route** - Roadside clearing (fuel reduction) of private properties along String Canyon Road and Grizzly Flat Road from the Post Office on Sciaroni Road, to Coles Station. Completed in 2008, this Project improved the vehicle travel route of these egress roads in the event an evacuation of the Community should ever become necessary.
- **GF-2: Grizzly Pines School** - This project was to make the Grizzly Pines School a potential safe area if an evacuation of the School (during a wildfire) was not possible. The project was completed in 2008.
- **GF-3: Collector Evacuation Route Roads** - Roadside clearing (fuel reduction) of private properties along collector roads within the Community. These roads provide access to the GF-1 Primary Evacuation Route. This project was completed in 2008.
- **GF-4: Shaded Fuel Break** - The first of four shaded fuel breaks to wrap around the Grizzly Flats community. GF-4, at the southwest side of the community, starts at the south end of Blue Mountain Drive and goes north, ending at Logan's Grade. The project will be completed in 2009.
- **GF-5, GF-6, and GF-7: Shaded Fuel Breaks** - These shaded fuel break projects were funded this past winter and are being designed at this time. They will start at Logan's Grade and wrap around the community, ending at the south side of the old Post Office on Grizzly Flat Road.

These Fire Safe Council fuel reduction projects are significant, but are not the final effort or answer to making the Grizzly Flats community and the surrounding areas fire safe. The efforts of individual property owners to their own properties are needed to bring the overall fire safety of the community to a higher standard. Maintenance of the Fuel Breaks are also important and something we must plan for in the future.

Creating a Defensible Space

The key to improving the odds of your house surviving a wildfire is the defensibility of the house itself. The Grizzly Flats Fire Safe Council (GFFSC) will provide an advisory Residential Clearance Evaluation of your property at no cost. Contact Judie Irwin, GFFSC Defensible Space Coordinator, at 530-622-8258.

As of January 1, 2005 the State of California Public Resource Code (PRC), Section 4291, Defensible Space requirements increased the defensible space distance around every structure on a property from 30 feet to 100 feet, or to the property line, whichever is closest. An article entitled Shared Responsibility, Shared Success Take Action Now! can be found at the EDCFSC web site (www.edcfiresafe.org). The article describes the requirements and discusses important cautions and details of the following subjects:

- **Firebreak** = 0 to 30 feet from all structures. Remove all highly flammable vegetation, dead and dying ground and standing fuels. Single specimens of well spaced and pruned trees and shrubs may remain.
- **Reduced Fuel Zone** = 30 to 100 feet from all structures. Remove dead and dying surface fuels. Arrange trees and shrubs in such a way that it makes it difficult for fire to transfer from one fuel source to another. The spacing of shrubs should be at least 5 times the height of the shrub.

Homeowner Treatment of Personal Real Estate (Developed or Vacant Land)

- The EDCFSC offers a free brush chipping service. Information on this and other free services is available by calling 530-647-1700 or online at www.edcfiresafe.org. Taking the time to review this website will be informative.
- Neighbors working together can accomplish more than individual property owners working alone. Coordination with several neighbors for one or more work-weekends can be beneficial to the entire neighborhood.

Firescaping: Plant Spacing Guidelines

The following guidelines are designed to break the continuity of fuel masses, which will interrupt the spread of flames from one plant to another or vertical movements via ladder fuels.

Trees

Minimum distance from the edge of one tree canopy to the edge of next tree canopy according to topography:

- 0 to 20% slope = 10 feet
- 20% to 40% slope = 20 feet
- 40% and over = 30 feet
- Remove all limbs to 15 feet above the ground, but no more than 1/3 of the tree's total height.

Warning: If sizeable trees must be removed (trees with trunks 6" or greater in diameter at chest height), these trees are more safely removed by professionals.

Shrubs

Minimum horizontal spacing between edges of shrubs according to topography:

- 0 to 20% slope = 2 times height of shrub
- 20% to 40% slope = 4 times height of shrub
- 40% and over = 6 times height of shrub

Minimum vertical spacing between top of shrub and bottom of lower tree branches = 3 times the height of the shrub.

Shrubs within 5 to 10 feet of a building are close enough to bring a fire in contact with the building's walls, decks, or porches. Planting and landscaping within this space is best limited to succulent ground covers, gravel, mulches, walkways, and green lawns. If irrigation water is limited, let landscaping be concentrated here.

Making Your Home Fire Safe

Check the condition of your home's components. A properly maintained home will more likely resist the effects of a wildland fire. A partial list of a structure's components is provided:

- **Fire Retardant Roof** - Structures should have a Class "A" rated roofing system to prevent its ignition from embers carried in the wind.
- **Screened Chimney** - Every solid fuel burning appliance is required to have an ash screen to prevent embers from exiting the chimney.
- **Dual Pane Windows** - Windows should be at least dual pane to resist breakage during a fire.
- **Soffit (Boxed-in) Roof Overhang** - Roof overhangs with soffits are better able to resist accumulation of heat and flying embers ("fire brands") than open framing. Eave venting requirements have changed with the new California Building Code requirements. Consult local Building Inspection Department for more details.
- **Enclosed Under-deck Areas** - Wood decks with enclosed walls around under deck area offer

greater fire protection to the deck.

- **Roofs and Gutters** - Keep roofs and gutters free of leaves, needles, cones and twigs to prevent ignition from wind carried embers.
- **Smoke Detectors** - Functional and properly located smoke detectors will alert building occupants of the need to evacuate a structure. Replace smoke detector batteries twice a year.
- **Fire Extinguishers** - Small fires within a home can be extinguished with a fire extinguisher when identified early. Understand the proper method of using a fire extinguisher.

Check with the Building Inspection Department for current regulations before making repairs to your home.

Evacuation Plan

The occupant of every home in Grizzly Flats has been provided with a courtesy Evacuation Packet from the GFFSC. For more information, contact Mark Almer at 530-622-3774.

Residents should have an Evacuation Plan of Action, which the entire family should be familiar with in advance of its need. At a minimum it should include:

- Map of the House Exits
- An Established Meeting Place
- Designated Friend or Relative as a Contact
- Checklist of Family Essentials
- If asked by the authorities to evacuate; Do not hesitate!

Questions About Wildland Fires

Should you have questions about wildland fire safety and/or specific issues discussed in this publication, the Agencies shown below can provide answers.

- Everyone should be interested in fire safety.
- Be fire safe!

Governmental Agency Acknowledgments

