



FIREWISE USA[®]
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

AL TAHOE COMMUNITY
FIREWISE USA[®] ASSESSMENT
SOUTH LAKE TAHOE
CALIFORNIA

March 2021

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Introduction

The Al Tahoe Neighborhood and South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue joined forces in 2020 to address local citizens' concerns regarding wildfire risks in their community. The goal of the team was to prevent wildfires within the Al Tahoe neighborhood and to reduce their potential impacts by educating homeowners and residents about wildfire preparedness and how to plan for and prevent wildfires while preserving the natural environment.

The Firewise USA® program teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent damage and losses. Participation in the program is attained by any community and/or neighborhood committed to reducing risks from wildland fire.

The risk assessment will help identify threats and hazards and will guide the priorities and actions for the Al Tahoe Neighborhood. The risk assessment will be the community team's primary tool in determining the risk reduction priorities within Al Tahoe's site boundaries.

The mission of the Al Tahoe Neighborhood and South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue Firewise Team is to address wildfire risk by:

- Acquiring and maintaining an Al Tahoe Neighborhood Firewise Community designation.
- Actively informing, educating, participating, and preparing the community — via outreach programs.
- Developing and maintaining a wildfire protection plan.
- Proactively providing area-wide wildland fire safety cooperation with allied organizations.
- Proactively applying for and securing grants to complete projects, including fuel reduction, education, and other fire prevention and preparedness activities.

Participants in the Application Process / Data Gathering:

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Definition of the Home Ignition Zone

The Al Tahoe Community, located in South Lake Tahoe, California, is in a wildland urban interface zone. The variables in a fire scenario are when the fire will occur, and where. This assessment addresses the wildfire-related characteristics of the Al Tahoe community. It examines the areas exposure to wildfire as it relates to ignition potential. Wildfires will happen — exclusion is not a choice. The assessment does not focus on specific homes but examines the Al Tahoe neighborhood as a whole.

A house burns because of its interrelationship with everything in its surrounding home ignition zone (HIZ) — the house and its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, homeowners must prepare their homes to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. This can be accomplished using hardscaping and landscaping techniques that create breaks in the vegetation in the HIZ, helping to influence and decrease fire behavior. Maintenance activities such as removing dead vegetation from the area immediately around the structures, reducing the amount of vegetation on the ground, and thinning/pruning trees, are simple and easy steps that will affect the intensity of the wildfire within the HIZ.

Al Tahoe residents can reduce their risk of destruction during a wildfire by taking actions within their home ignition zones, which includes the home and everything around it, up to 100 feet from the foundation.

Included in this assessment are observations made while surveying the community of Al Tahoe. The assessment addresses the ease in which home ignitions can occur under severe wildfire conditions and how these ignitions might be avoided within the home ignition zones of affected residents.

The result of the assessment is that wildfire behavior will be dominated by the residential characteristics of this area. The good news is that by addressing community vulnerabilities, residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss. Relatively small investments of time and effort will reap great rewards in wildfire safety.

Description of (size and nature of) the severe case wildland fire characteristics that could threaten the area

Fire intensity and spread rate depend on the fuel type and condition (live/dead), the weather conditions prior and during ignition, and the topography. Generally, the following relationships hold between the fire behavior and the fuel, weather and topography.

- Fine fuels ignite more easily and spread faster with higher intensities than coarser fuels. For a given fuel, the more there is and the more continuous it is, the faster the fire spreads and the higher the intensity. Fine fuels take a shorter time to burn out than coarser fuels.
- The weather conditions affect the moisture content of the dead and live vegetative fuels. Dead fine fuel moisture content is highly dependent on the relative humidity and the degree of sun exposure. The lower the relative humidity and the greater the sun exposure, the lower will be the fuel moisture content. Lower fuel moistures produce higher spread rates and fire intensities.
- Wind speed significantly influences the rate of fire spread and fire intensity. The higher the wind speed, the greater the spread rate and intensity.

The predominant winds in the area are from the SW.

- Topography influences fire behavior principally by the steepness of the slope. However, the configuration of the terrain such as narrow draws, saddles and so forth can influence fire spread and intensity. In general, the steeper the slope, the higher the uphill fire spread and intensity.

There are forested areas in close proximity to the Al Tahoe neighborhood at the southerly end, and east of the Lake Tahoe basin that are overgrown and pose an increased threat of wildfires.

Embers or firebrands are produced from burning needles, leaves, bark, twigs and cones, when natural vegetation burns. Embers tend to be carried aloft by the superheated air of the fire and can then be carried long distances in advance of the actual flame front by even light winds. It is not uncommon to find glowing embers a mile ahead of the main fire.

The AI Tahoe community has experienced “ember attacks” in the past during wildland fire events in the untreated and overgrown stands around the Lake Tahoe basin.

If the conditions are right, thousands of embers can be produced in a relatively short time by even a modest wildland blaze. These tend to fly like incendiary snowflakes, eventually settling to the surface and even “drifting” to form small clumps. If they land on a combustible material, they can cause a new ignition, even though the main fire is still a long distance away. This is the way that “spot fires” are ignited. This is also the primary threat to residences.

Wildfires have occurred in surrounding areas in the past. These areas have the potential to produce severe fire behavior that could impact the AI Tahoe residential area.

Three recent fires grew larger than fires of the past 50 years.

- 2002 Gondola Fire – 673 acres
- Showers Fire - 294 acres
- 2007 Angora Fire - 3,100 acres and destroyed or damaged more than 254 homes. This was the largest fire ever recorded in the Lake Tahoe basin.



A firefighter standing in front of a burning home during the Angora Fire in 2007

- The Lake Tahoe Basin recorded 2,741 fires during the period from 1973-2014.

2002 Gondola Fire



If a wind event occurs, the wind carried embers and flames could move towards the AI Tahoe neighborhood. Torching trees can increase fire intensity and become excellent generators of embers for spotting.



2007 Angora Fire

Smoke, ash and airborne embers were deposited within the AI Tahoe community during the 2007 Angora Fire.

South Lake Tahoe has a significant number of residents and visitors for a forested environment, especially over the summer and holidays. Human caused fires have exceeded natural ignitions every year.

According to the increase in hotel occupancy tax and emergency incidents responded to by police and fire, the population of Lake Tahoe increases by four times from winter to summer. This means there could easily be 100,000 to 150,000 people in our area during the summertime and holidays.

Site Description

The City of South Lake Tahoe has five fire evacuation districts, one of which is the Al Tahoe neighborhood, a triangular-shaped area bordered by the Truckee River Meadow to the southwest, Lake Tahoe to the north, and Highway 50 to the east. There are 1520 parcels in this Al Tahoe district with a population of about 2235. Approximately 66% of the parcels have “out of area ownership.”



The Al Tahoe neighborhood has a wide range of densities and a mix of residential uses including single-family dwellings, duplexes, apartment buildings, and condominiums. There are several 2nd home residences, vacation rentals, and unmaintained lots, and an HOA within the neighborhood. Lot sizes vary, but most are 50' by 120'.

The neighborhood also has excellent access to the lake and two public beaches, (Regan Beach, Lakeview Commons), various retail uses along Harrison Avenue/Hwy 50, and a small commercial center at the intersections of Highway 50 and Al Tahoe Boulevard.

South Lake Tahoe's Fire Station #2 is located within the boundaries of the Al Tahoe neighborhood and is fully staffed with 4 crew members, a ladder truck, and a cross staffed Type 1 Engine

The neighborhood has a wide variety of architectural styles, ranging from small cabins to modern homes, and multi-unit buildings. The neighborhood also contains historical log style cabins with wooden shingles that have remained unchanged over the years.

Al Tahoe lies within a forested environment surrounded by a predominately pine/fir forest with brushy and grass understory. Areas within the community also have forest-like attributes including some native brush and scattered remnant trees. Many "untreated" parcels are publicly owned. The topography of the area is nearly level and sits at an elevation of 6265'.

The climate is typical of mountainous areas of Northern California. Normal summer days are warm with considerable cooling at night. The average high temperature for July and August is 75 degrees. Typical winds during the summer months are generally from the SW consistently in the 8-25 mph range. Afternoon cumulus build-ups can occur during the summer, sometimes bringing thundershowers and dry lightning. In general, summer precipitation is negligible. During late summer and fall, daytime temperatures are warm, and nights become cold and clear.

Severe weather conditions do frequently occur in El Dorado County. These conditions include heavy rain and snowfall, high winds, extended drought conditions, extreme cold and hot temperatures, sizable hail, and extensive lightning strikes. These extreme conditions have often resulted in extended power outages, wildland and structural fires, public and private structure damage, flooding, multi-casualty incidents, stranded travelers, landslides, avalanches, hazardous material spills, and dangerous road conditions.

Many dwellings and other buildings within the community are old wood frame buildings, many of which pre-date modern building codes. The large number of dwellings in such a small, confined area, tends to magnify the probability of human caused or accidental fires. Additionally, many lots are seen as lacking adequate defensible space. There is also a significant likelihood of a fire starting from outside the community and spreading towards it. For these reasons, all buildings are at risk for damage or destruction from wildfire intrusion. A large, wind driven fire could be expected to generate many

firebrands, which could ignite numerous spot fires within the community, potentially damaging or destroying many buildings and/or infrastructure.

Risk Assessment Process

The Firewise USA® Community wildfire Risk Assessment approach describes a method wherein concerned citizens can assess the general, overall conditions of a small community and the potential wildfire impacts. Evaluators inspect many aspects of construction including roofing, siding, eaves, vents, and windows. Evaluators also inspect the condition of vegetation and other potential fuels at three distances, or Zones, from the structures: Zone 1, from 0' to 5'; Zone 2, from 5' to 30'; and Zone 3 from 30' to 100' away from the home or structure.

For this Risk Assessment, the Firewise USA® approach was modified for several reasons:

- Rather than attempting to evaluate all 1520 parcels, (homes or lots), representative samples (20%) of the parcels within the neighborhood were evaluated and used as a basis for the study.
- A “Digital App” was developed for smart phones by Ryan Malhoski GIS Analyst, City of South Lake Tahoe, so evaluators could quickly input data, and results could be automatically summarized on an Excel spreadsheet.
- The assessment team members did not have permission to enter properties for an evaluation of specific construction conditions. Generally, only features that could readily be seen from a public right-of-way were evaluated.

A team approach was taken in preparing this assessment of fire hazards and risks in AI Tahoe. Relevant background data was initially collected and discussed by core team members (identified in the introduction to this document).

Since a detailed evaluation of each structure was not possible for this report, only those features that could be readily evaluated from the street were used for this first-level of analysis. The features to be evaluated were:

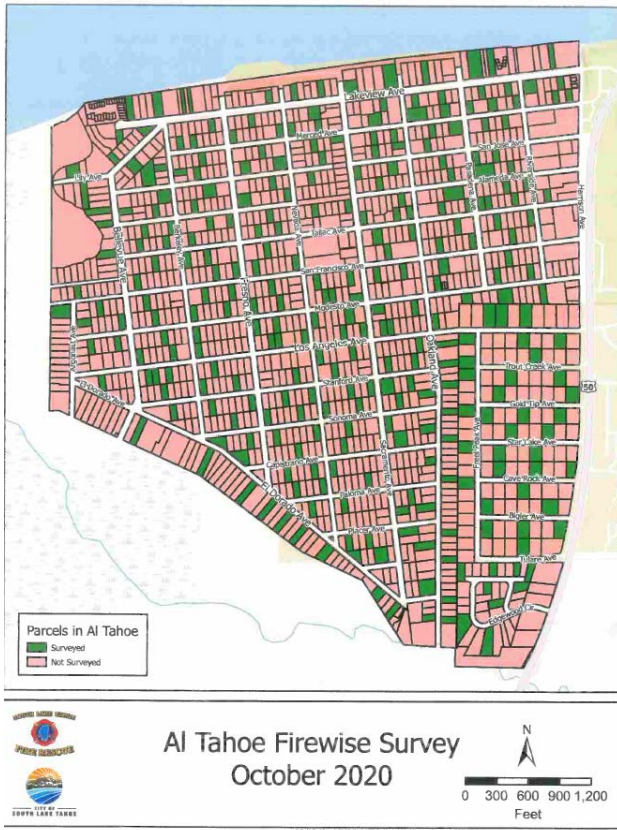
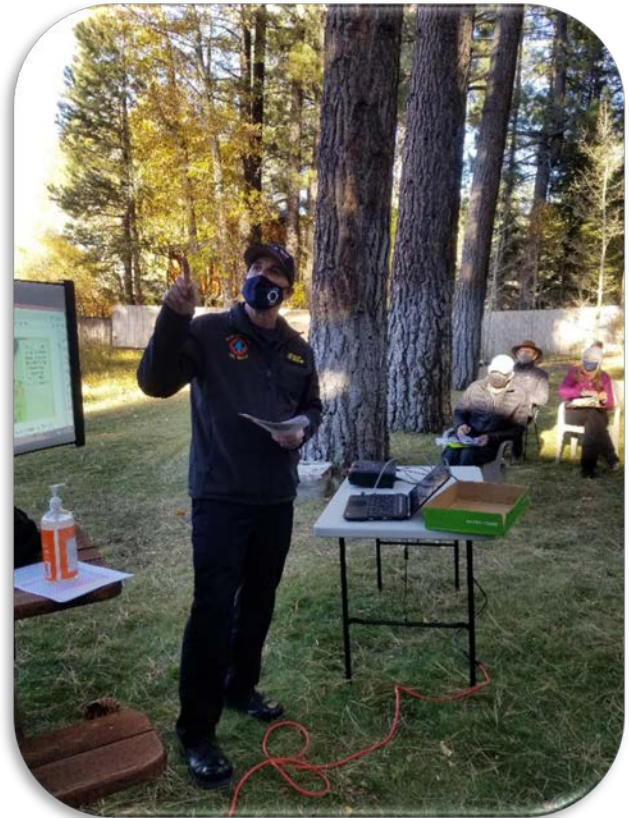
- Roofing material
- Siding material
- Gutters
- Tree limbs overhanging structures
- Accumulation of vegetation, either live or dead
- Debris accumulation on roof
- Landscaping or hardscaping around the building and beyond
- Tree canopy clearance
- Address identification (by personal team observations)

The community assessment took place October 27, 2020.



SLTFR and Firewise team leaders conducted a training session for several other community volunteers, who then dispersed throughout the community and conducted a visual review of all AI Tahoe neighborhoods from a roadside perspective. Observations were noted of both favorable and unfavorable conditions, and the results are found in subsequent sections.

The combined information led to the development of recommendations for mitigation actions through a collaborative process where draft materials were circulated, reviewed and revised based on inputs from the group.



Digital parcel map – lots surveyed in green

Summary of Findings Data Chart

A total of 300 randomly selected parcels out of 1520 (about 20%) were assessed and covered all blocks within the AI Tahoe neighborhood. These were primarily residential structures and lots, but also included some publicly owned land sites. The results of all the evaluations were compiled, and the results are summarized below.

Total Parcels Surveyed	300					
Breakdown of Roofing Material	Class A	273	91%			
	Wood	9	3%			
	No Answer	18	6%			
Breakdown of Siding Material	Wood	268	89%			
	Masonry/Stucco	11	4%			
	Unknown	4	1%			
Breakdown of Gutter Type	No Answer	17	6%			
	Open	71	24%			
	Covered	6	2%			
	No Answer	223	74%			
	Yes	Yes%	No	No%	No Answer	No Answer%
Live Vegetation (Trees, Shrubs, Ect.) 0-5 feet From Structure	141	47%	153	51%	6	2%
Dead Vegetation 0-5 feet From Structure	41	14%	253	84%	6	2%
Hardscaping 0-5 feet From Structure	184	61%	106	35%	10	3%
Tree Limbs Overhanging Structure	165	55%	123	41%	12	4%
Debris Accumulation on Roof	69	23%	217	72%	14	5%
Maintained Lawns and Plantings 5-30 feet from Structure	98	33%	195	65%	7	2%
Unmaintained Grasses 5-30 feet from Structure	42	14%	253	84%	5	2%
Ladder Fuels Present 5-30 feet from Structure	105	35%	189	63%	6	2%
Heavy Accumulation of Live Vegetation 30-100 feet from Structure	21	7%	250	83%	29	10%
Dead Material 30-100 feet from Structure	53	18%	219	73%	28	9%
12 Feet Between Tree Canopies 30-100 feet from Structure	110	37%	160	53%	30	10%



City Fire Safety Inspector Dan Brown, Community leader Dianne Rees, and SLTFR Battalion Chief Karl Koeppen on volunteer training day.

Risk Assessment Results Overview (Zones 1-3)

Zone 1 (Structure 1 to 5 feet Away)

The majority of buildings had an address number visible from the roadway. However, there was no standard size or type of address marker utilized. While a few were made of reflective material, most were generally homemade, non-reflective, and of various sizes. Many numbers were faded or blended in with the structure, making them difficult to find and read.

Roof coverings were evaluated based upon whether the structure had a Class A code compliant roof or not. Class A roof coverings include asphalt fiberglass composition shingles, concrete, metal and flat/barrel-shaped tiles. The team identified that 91% of the structures had roofs with a Class A material.

The assessment identified, however, that only about 4% of the structures had fire resistant siding material. 89% of the homes were made of wood, which directly relates to the ignitability of the home.

47% of the structures assessed had live vegetation in this area, and 55% had tree limbs overhanging the structure.

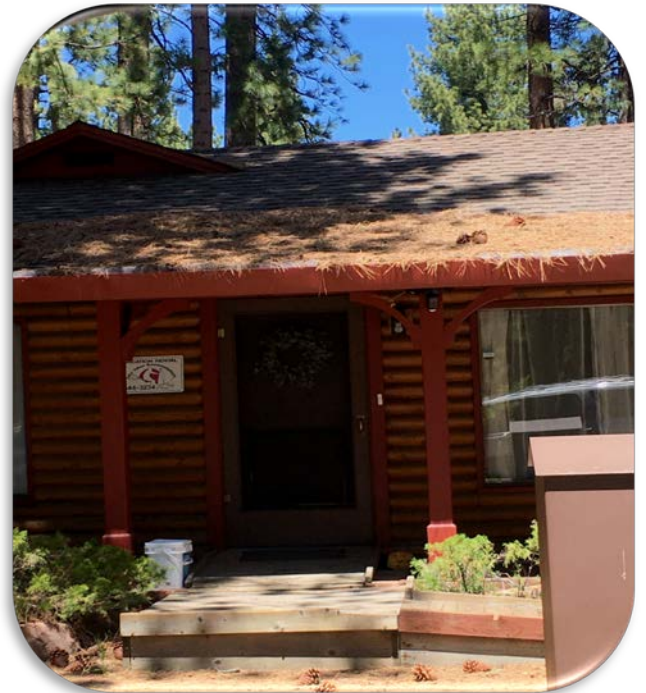
61% of the structures had hardscaping in this zone, which is helpful in creating a buffer immediately around a structure.



The collection of leaves and debris on roofs, and in uncovered gutters, poses a significant threat during a wildfire.

The assessment evaluated whether gutters were present, opened, or covered.

77 structures had gutters. Only 2% of those had covers. Many opened gutters were filled with pine needles and debris.



Flammable vegetation, within five feet of a structure, as well as debris accumulation on a roof, creates a very receptive fuel bed which significantly increases the threat of, loss, or damage to a structure during a wildfire.

Zone 2 (Structure 5 to 30 feet Away)

Only about 33% of structures had maintained lawns and plantings, which breaks up the continuity of the fuel and will slow fire spread. 14% had unmaintained grasses, and, approximately 35% of the properties had ladder fuels present in this zone, which will significantly contribute to a fire moving from the ground into the tree canopies and spreading further.



Zone 3 (Structure 30 to 100 feet Away)

7% of the assessments found a heavy accumulation of live vegetation, and about 18% had an accumulation of dead material.

Of great concern, observed by evaluators, was that approximately 53% of the parcels had a minimum of 12 foot spacing between tree canopies while 47% did not.

Lack of adequate tree canopy spacing in the area seems to be one of the greatest risks to the Al Tahoe Neighborhood.



Important Considerations

The Firewise USA® program acknowledges that there are many reasons and values that lead a person to live in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and that there may be a desire for certain flammable components to exist on their property. It is important for residents to understand the implications of the choices they are making. These choices directly relate to the ignitability of their home ignition zones during a wildfire, and whether it can be saved during a fire event.

The most important considerations to provide a safer community would be:

1. All residents should have a “lean, clean and green zone” from 0-30 feet from their structure.
2. The area from 30’ to 100’ should be maintained as the “reduced fuel zone”.
3. Treatment and maintenance of all occupied and vacant parcels to achieve a fire resilient condition would prevent continued tree torching and ember production within the community during a wildfire.
4. A standardized plan for “address” marking and identification on all houses is needed. Reflective address signs would help emergency responders. “If they can’t find you, they can’t help you!”
5. Establish a plan to reduce combustible materials by 50% in the next 3 years.
6. Assess and review all public lands within the AI Tahoe community to insure defensible compliance with California’s state-mandated program.

Observations and Recommendations

1. Positive Community Attributes

a. Residents and leaders in the Al Tahoe neighborhood are actively involved in supporting and presenting fire mitigation, preparation, and evacuation plans to the public.

Examples include:

- “Prepare for Evacuation” event
- 2 day “Al Tahoe Clean-up” event (see supplementary docs)

b. Fire Station #2 is within the Al Tahoe District and is staffed 24/7, supported by 2 additional fully staffed City fire stations and nearby mutual aid resources including 3 local fire districts, CalFire and USFS.

c. The community has a water system that is owned and maintained by the South Tahoe Public Utilities District. Fire hydrants with good pressure are throughout Al Tahoe.

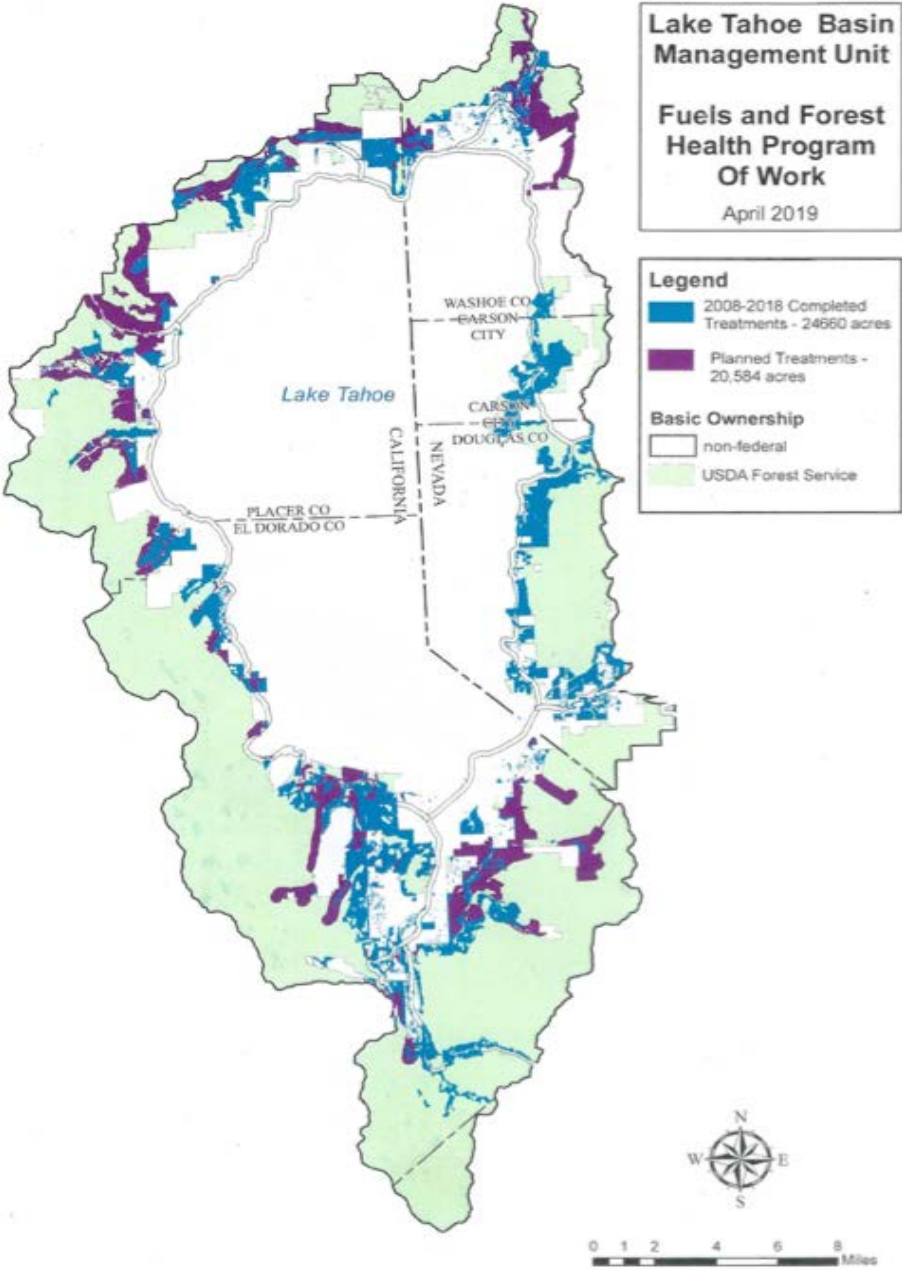
d. South Lake Tahoe has a recently updated neighborhood wildfire evacuation plan and map that includes refuge locations. (refuge site for Al Tahoe: South Tahoe Middle School)

e. Liberty Utilities has mitigated ignition hazards with extensive tree trimming/removal along power lines throughout the entire Al Tahoe neighborhood.



Fire Station #2 is located in the HOA of the Al Tahoe neighborhood

f. Fuels reduction treatments in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) have greatly reduced fuel loadings and moderated fire in a way that allows for a more successful initial attack.



Tahoe Basin Fuels Reduction Graphic

g. There are a number of excellent examples within the community of a Firewise home and property.



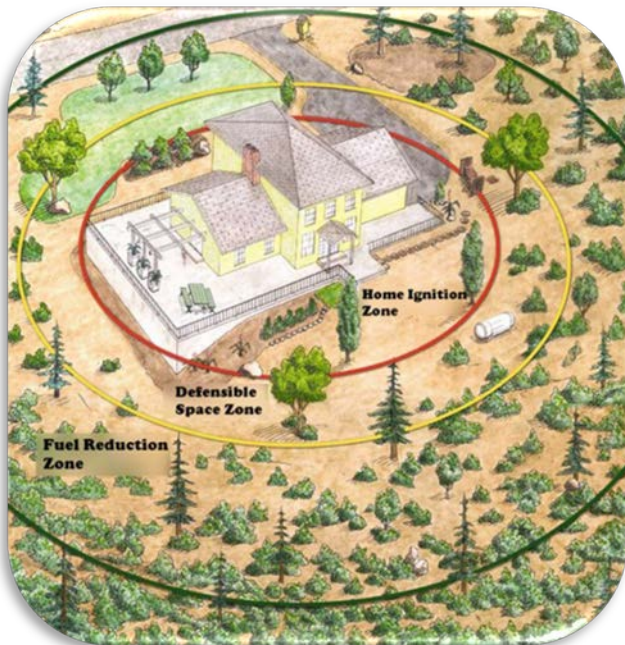
Al Tahoe home with Firewise USA® wildfire risk reduction application practices.

2. Roads

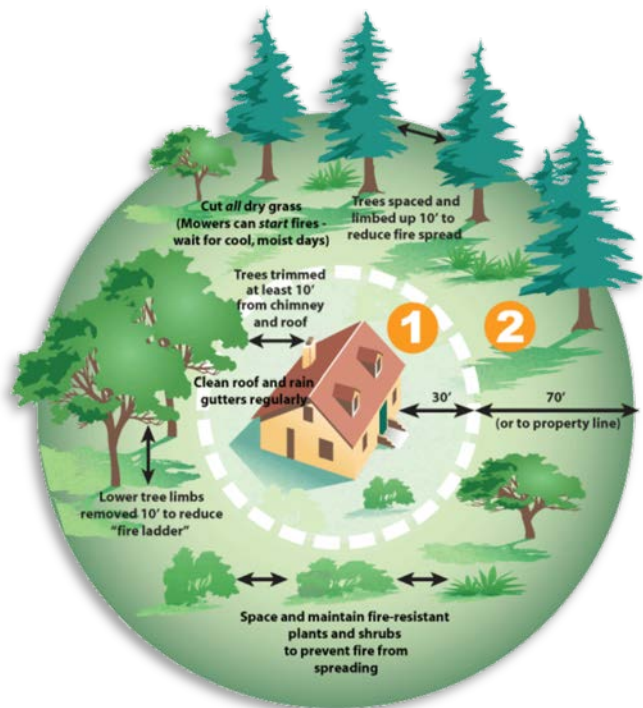
a. All roads in the Al Tahoe neighborhood are paved and maintained by the City of South Lake Tahoe. However, some streets are narrow, have trees obstructing the thoroughfare, and are a bit tight for large engines.

b. U.S. State Highway 50 is the main paved road in and out of the City of South Lake Tahoe. If a fire occurs in the region, this road may become gridlocked and impassable for Al Tahoe residents, preventing evacuations.

Items Creating Increased Risk to Community Safety and Areas Identified as a Concern for Improvement



Defensible space zones around a home



Structures & Defensible Space

- a) While Defensible Space in the “Lean, Clean, Green Zone” (0-30) feet was present on many residences, there still exists a need for fine-tuning. There are some homes with grass and forest litter accumulations right up to the structures.
- b) Some homes lacked adequate treatment in what is referred to as the “Reduced Fuel Zone” (30-100 feet). Clearance of 100 feet around all structures would reduce the acres of untreated fuels, provide additional protection to all homes and improve the survivability of structures within the community.

- c) Some homes had firewood stored immediately adjacent to the structure, on porches or under decks, or in close proximity to structures.



- d) Some homes had roofs and gutters with forest litter and needle accumulations.



- e) There were homes where the highly flammable ornamental vegetation was immediately adjacent to structures, decks or along driveways, which increased risk of structure ignitions or created additional hazards for emergency responders.

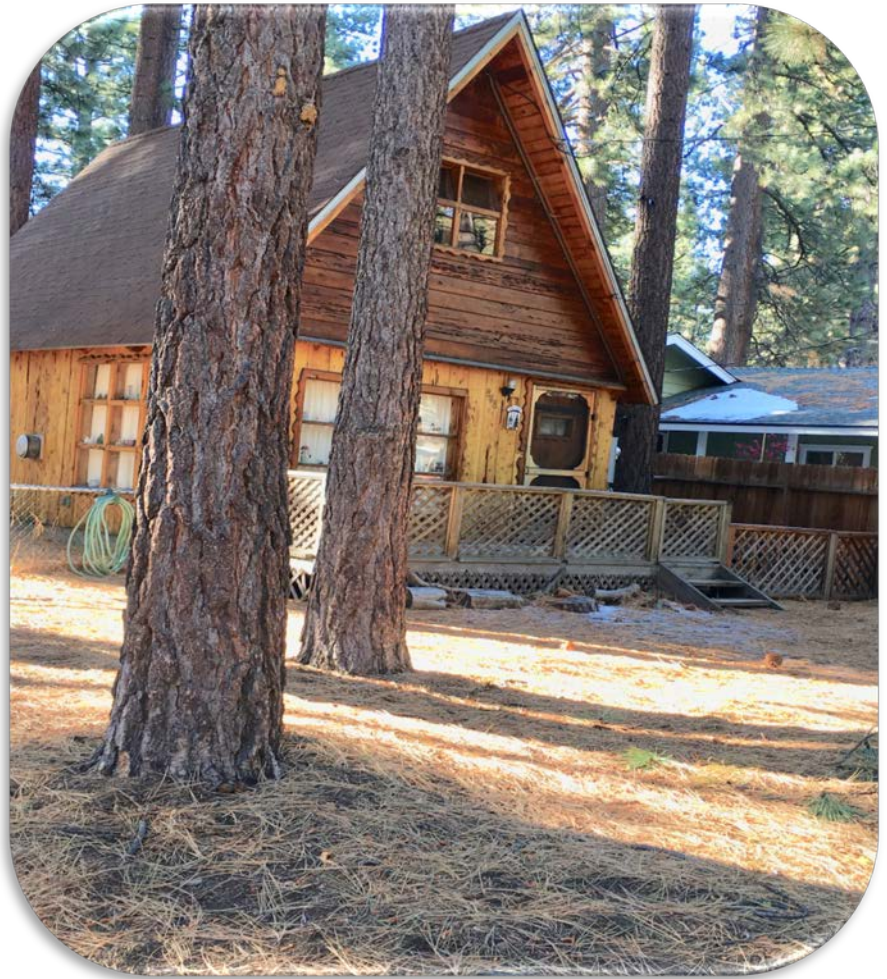
f) Some of the decks were skirted by decorative lattice, with vegetation or pine needles right up to it.

g) Many homes have wooden fences surrounding the home and attached directly to the residence, which can create a wick for spread from the wildland, to the fence, to the structure.

h) Some residences had collections of human generated fuels “human treasures” and/or flammable materials

stored on their lots, adjacent to their homes and/or under decks. These materials can increase probability of structure ignition and/or create hazards to firefighters attempting to take actions in structure protection.

i) Many areas have next generation small trees growing in need of thinning; these are easy to remove while they are still small.



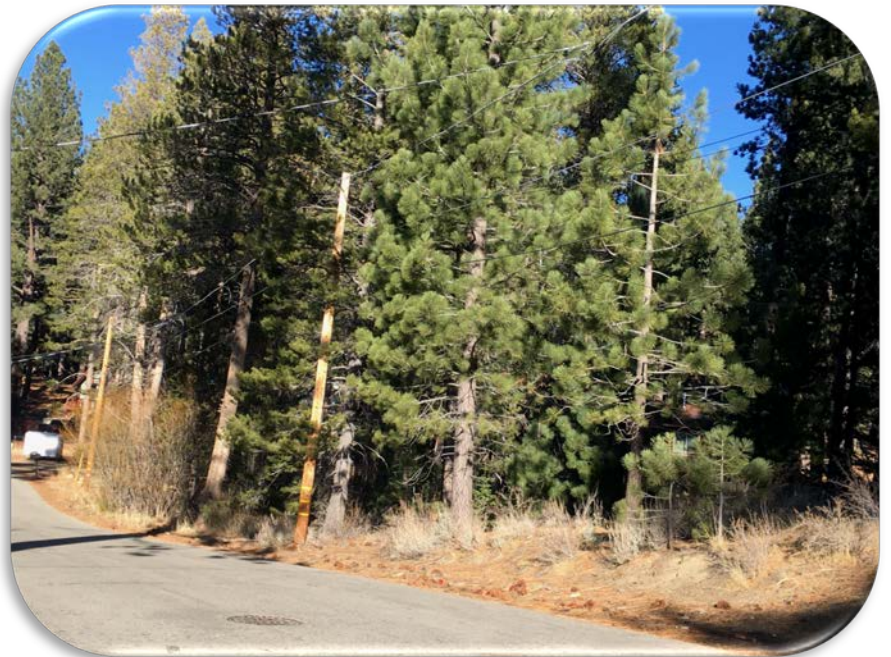
Educating a Community

- ✓ The community will benefit from a fire behavior education program about firewood stacked and miscellaneous human generated fuels (recycling, plywood, cardboard boxes, bark piles etc.) that could be easily ignited next to the home.
- ✓ A number of informational pamphlets on defensible space are available to address the issues identified in this report. There are also many websites that can be searched for defensible space suggestions and requirements. By understanding fire behavior, residents would have a better understanding of why defensible space is essential and why California has laws (Public Resources Code 4291) requiring clearance to 100 feet.
- ✓ Chimney and vent screens – 2016 California Building Code 2113.9.2 requires chimney or stovepipe openings to be equipped with a metal screen having openings between 3/8” and 1/2”. All vents should have screening for fire protection.
- ✓ Members of South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue and the AI Tahoe Community Firewise Committee and Volunteers are available to discuss opportunities to make homes and property safer in the event of a wildfire.
- ✓ Homes with wooden fences attached to the structure should have clearance maintained around the fence. Consider a metal gate or some sort of break between the wooden fence and the structure.
- ✓ Homes with lattice around the deck should be cleared of dead materials and screened to keep out debris from under the deck/house that could ignite.
- ✓ Go Bags, with informational materials including Firewise USA Defensible Space pamphlets, were provided by the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, and distributed to residents throughout AI Tahoe and to other City residents (via group presentations) to aid in personal evacuation preparedness.

Vegetation Beyond the Home Ignition Zone

- a) Vegetation on undeveloped property within the community is not part of California Public Resources Code 4291 for 100' of defensible space, but it is a concern. These properties are susceptible to ember ignitions with the threat of multiple spot fires occurring within the community in the event of a wildfire. These areas should be treated to reduce ladder fuels and the spread of fire.
- b) The community of Al Tahoe has lands owned by the State of California, California, Tahoe Conservancy, South Tahoe Public Utility District, City of South Lake Tahoe, U.S. Forest Service, and the South Tahoe Redevelopment Agency. Some of these properties have been treated, some have not.

Untreated publicly owned lot
in Al Tahoe



Recommended Action Regarding Vegetation Management:

Work with all the landowners to discuss the fire spread potential and work together to develop a treatment plan.

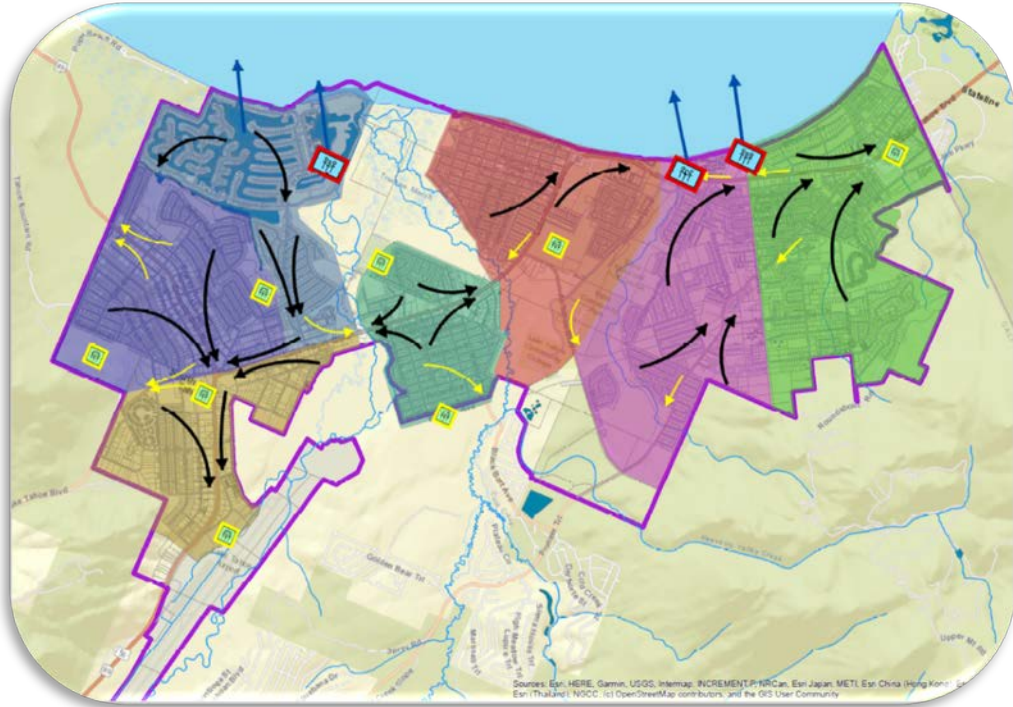
General Recommendations:

Efforts should be made to educate homeowners about the following:

1. The benefits of defensible space and reduced fuel spacing and tree limbing.
2. Why the elimination of ladder fuels (fuels bridging the gap between the surface and lower tree limbs) is necessary.
3. The removal of lower branches (ladder fuels) and why this is needed.
4. General tree thinning and how it will reduce fuel volume and maintain forest health.
5. Why continued thinning or removal of old dead and new brush growth is needed.
6. The importance of thinning or removing new seedlings or saplings.
7. Why removing accumulated surface litter or debris is essential fire mitigation practice.
8. Keeping debris piles 100' from structures.
9. Residents and visitors must be knowledgeable about the safety of fire pits and bowls for recreational use and what the current City ordinance allows. (Gas or charcoal only, no wood)
10. Why owners should manage trees on their property and inspect them for bug infestation. Information relating to identification and treatment options can be found at this CAL FIRE website: www.readyforwildfire.org. Infested trees pose a threat to other trees in the area by spreading bugs. They may also pose a threat to your home, power lines or road access if not taken care of.
11. Keeping firewood at least 30' from structures during fire season.

Additional Considerations: Emergency Preparedness

Families should have a plan in the event of a wildfire or any other emergency. Have a safety plan and be **Ready, Set, Go!** Know your evacuation routes out of the area, sign up with the El Dorado County Sheriffs Office Emergency Alert System's "**Code Red**" for cell phone notifications. Residents and tourists should activate the "**Wireless Emergency Alert**" (WEA) function on cell phones for emergency notifications.



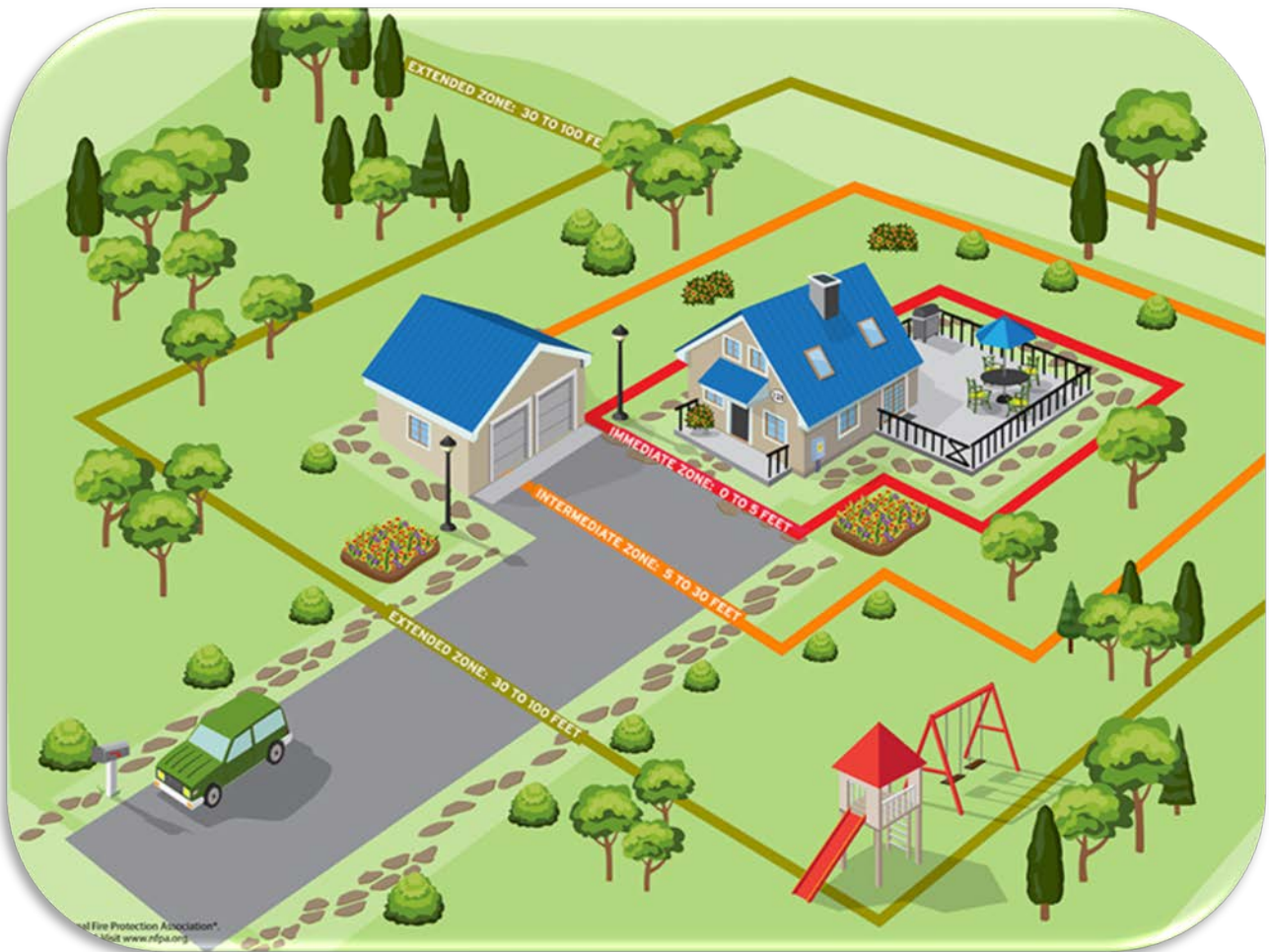
Homes and businesses in El Dorado County that have landlines will automatically receive **Code Red** alerts. Residents should have a plan for animals in case of the need to evacuate for an extended period.



Successful Firewise Modifications

When adequately prepared, a house can likely withstand a wildfire without the intervention of the fire service. Further, a house and its surrounding community can be both Firewise and compatible with the area's ecosystem. The Firewise USA® program is designed to enable communities to achieve a high level of protection against WUI fire loss even as a sustainable ecosystem balance is maintained.

A homeowner/community must focus attention on the home ignition zone and eliminate the fire's potential relationship with the house. This can be accomplished by disconnecting the house from high and/or low-intensity fire that could occur around it.



NFPA example of home ignition zone

Next Steps

After reviewing the contents of this assessment and its recommendations, the committee for the AI Tahoe Firewise Community, in cooperation with South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue, will determine whether or not it wishes to continue seeking Firewise USA® recognition. The Firewise USA® representative will contact the committee representative in 2021 to receive its decision.

If the site assessment and recommendations are accepted, then Firewise USA® recognition will be sought. The AI Tahoe Firewise Committee will create “agreed-upon, area-specific solutions” to the wildfire risk reduction recommendations and create an action plan in cooperation with South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue.

Assuming the assessment area seeks to achieve national Firewise USA® recognition status, it will integrate the following standards into a plan:

- Form a committee that’s comprised of residents and other applicable wildfire stakeholders. This group will be developing the sites risk reduction priorities, develop a multi-year action plan based on the risk assessment, and oversee the completion of the annual renewal requirements needed to retain an “in good standing” status.
- Develop an Action Plan with a prioritized list of risk reduction projects/investments for the participating site, along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually, or over a period of multiple years. Action plans are developed by the committee and need updating at least every three years.
- Each site is required to invest the equivalent of **\$25.43** per dwelling unit (1 hour of volunteer service = **\$2.00**) for each habitable residence in wildfire risk reduction actions annually.

Note: Qualifying expenditures include contractor costs, rental equipment, volunteer activities, grants, etc. Residents completing select home modifications, along with any qualifying work performed at their home and in

the adjacent home ignition zones can contribute related hours and/or costs towards meeting the site's collective investment amount.

- The Firewise USA® certified community is required to have a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach or related activity annually.
- Every year the participating site must submit an annual renewal to maintain their “In Good Standing” status. The annual renewal application can be accessed through the Firewise USA® online management portal (<http://portal.firewise.org/>).

Residents should focus on making this a non-combustible area by removing any flammable vegetation or materials from wall exteriors; cleaning debris from roofs and gutters; and addressing home construction issues. Remember that, while wildfire cannot be eliminated from a property, it can be reduced in intensity.

Action Plan

Following the risk assessment and review of results by the Risk Assessment Committee, the following action items were identified to help reduce wildfire risk within the AI Tahoe district:

- Apply for and establish the AI Tahoe Neighborhood as a Firewise USA® Community.
- Continue regularly scheduled AI Tahoe Neighborhood and SLTFR meetings.
- Plan and conduct public educational meetings and activities each year. Events may include a fire prevention safety day in coordination with SLTFR as well as other topics, such as Go Bags preparedness and defensible space.
- Develop mailings (postal and electronic) to residents, property owners and businesses within the AI Tahoe Firewise area.
- Develop and maintain an AI Tahoe Firewise website. Utilize other social media resources, including Facebook, Instagram, and Next-door.
- Develop a program utilizing volunteers to complete home defensible space assessments for residents of the AI Tahoe neighborhood.
- Plan and implement a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or related activity annually, in conjunction with SLTFR, dedicated to a local Firewise USA® project.

- Continue to prepare wildfire prevention educational brochures, handouts, Go Bags, newsletters and displays for use during public meetings and other public venues.
- Seek grant opportunities to support AI Tahoe Firewise activities.
- Develop and initiate fundraising activities to offset costs and provide additional local services.
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA to document and report continuing participation in the program to maintain their “In Good Standing” status.
- Assess all publicly owned lands within the AI Tahoe community in order to develop a strategic plan to mitigate wildfire risks.

Summary Statement

Al Tahoe residents are reminded to be conscious of keeping high-intensity fire more than 100 feet from their homes. It is important for them to avoid fire contact with their structures, including firebrands or embers.

Science tells us that the home itself and 0-5 feet from the furthest attached exterior point of the home are most vulnerable to ember attacks. Residents should focus on making this a non-combustible area by removing any flammable vegetation or materials from wall exteriors; cleaning debris from roofs and gutters; and addressing home construction issues like vent screens.

Homeowners are reminded that street signs, addresses, road widths and fire hydrants do not keep a house from igniting. Proper attention to their home ignition zones does. They should identify the things that will ignite their homes and address those issues.

Weather is, of course, of great concern during wildfire season. At such time when fire weather is severe, homeowners should remember not to leave flammable items outside. This includes rattan doormats, flammable patio furniture, firewood stacked next to the house, or other flammables.

Remember that while wildfire cannot be eliminated from a property, it can be reduced in intensity.

“Be Prepared to Evacuate”

Community Meeting:

**June 25, 2019
South Lake Tahoe Senior Center
3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd
6 to 8:00 PM**



Neighbors are working together to take action now to prevent loss of property and life.

Are you **Prepared for a Fire and Evacuation**? Do you have your “Evacuation and Communication” plans ready?

Learn: **WHAT TO DO** **WHAT TO TAKE** **WHERE TO GO**
before, during, and after an evacuation

Highlights of the Meeting:

- * Overview of the Paradise, “Camp Fire,” and South Lake Tahoe

- * How to prepare **comprehensive** and **personal** **“Get Ready”** action plans and **“To Go”** kits

- * How to be **“pro-active”** in your own neighborhoods

- * **Q and A** – Local fire personnel, community and state leaders, local groups and agencies will be available to answer your questions.

“It’s not “IF” there is a wildfire – it’s “WHEN !””

Organized by the Tahoe Neighborhoods Group

<https://www.tahodailytribune.com/news/newly-elected-senator-brian-dahle-speaks-on-fire-preparedness-at-lake-tahoe/>

Newly-elected state Senator Brian Dahle speaks on fire preparedness at Lake Tahoe

Bill Rozak



California Senator Brian Dahle speaks to a full house about fire preparedness Tuesday at the Senior Center in South Lake Tahoe.

Bill Rozak / Tahoe Daily Tribune

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE, Calif. — Newly-elected state Senator Brian Dahle felt he had to come to Lake Tahoe to speak about wildfires. His cautionary remarks came before a group of roughly 100 people who gather at the senior center Tuesday for a fire preparedness meeting hosted by the Tahoe Neighborhood Group.

The discussion, like so many around the state, was framed in the context of increasingly destructive and deadly wildfires.

“I wanted to come here and share with the community that they need to be prepared,” Dahle, a former Lassen County supervisor and state assembly member, told the Tribune before the meeting began. “We’ve had fire suppression for a hundred years, but our forests are not in the state where we can stop catastrophic wildfires.

“A forest that has been thinned, stays alive,” he added later while speaking to the entire room. Dahle asked residents, even pleaded with them, to be responsible and make sure they have defensible space around their houses and have their insurance policies up to date.

“A lot of groups don’t want to cut trees, but we have to,” Dahle said. “We have to open up the canopy with limbs not touching each other. These fires are moving, at times, faster than a football field per second.”

Dahle told the Tribune he is working in Sacramento to “remove the burdens” on regulations and felt Senate Bill 901 that passed last year and provides \$1 billion for vegetation management was a step forward.

He also voted in favor of a bill he said passed a couple days ago that will update the 911 emergency system for the first time since the ‘70s. But none of that will help Lake Tahoe communities in the immediate future if a blaze breaks out, so he stressed the importance of residents doing what they can to save their properties. “You have to remove the fuel,” Dahle said. “Please do your defensible space, it could save your home.”



California Senator Brian Dahle speaks to a full house about fire preparedness Tuesday at the Senior Center in South Lake Tahoe.

Bill Rozak / Tahoe Daily Tribune

The meeting began with Tahoe Neighborhoods Group member Scott Robbins walking the audience through a timeline of Paradise’s Camp Fire using dramatic imagery and emergency scanner chatter.

The blaze claimed more than 80 lives, [according to CalFire](#), and destroyed 18,804 structures.

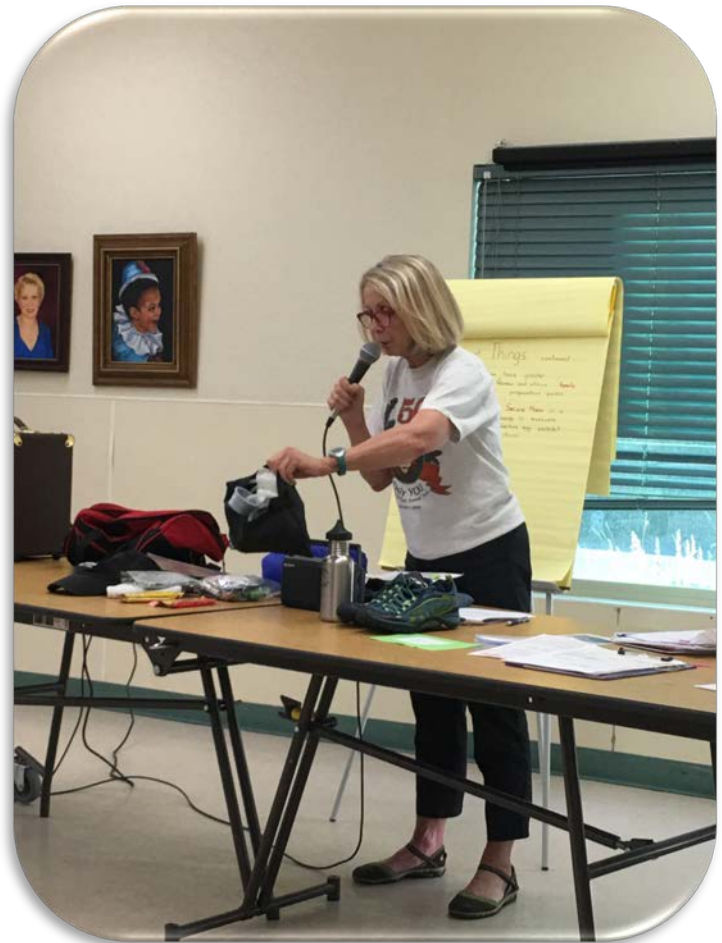
Robbins showed how fast the fire devastated the community, how there was an emergency communication breakdown, and how the escape roads leading into, and out of, Paradise, resemble Tahoe.

The neighborhood group handed out an “Emergency Evacuation ‘P’ List,” a list of eight words starting with “P” to help residents prepare for an approaching wildfire, such as important things to pack, what should go into an emergency kit, and other ideas and tips.

The group also handed out detailed maps of neighborhoods that showed every exit out of those areas.

A member of the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office helped audience members sign up for emergency alerts on their mobile phones.

A resident from the Golden Bear neighborhood talked about an emergency evacuation drill the neighborhood performed and the website they developed (goldenbearha.org) to keep residents informed.



Peggy Bourland, Tahoe Neighborhoods Group member, demonstrates how to prepare a “Go Bag”

The meeting then turned to a question and answer session with South Tahoe Public Utilities District General Manager John Thiel, Battalion Chief Jim Drennan of South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue, City Councilor Tamara Wallace, South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler, Fire Adapted Communities Program Coordinator Carlie Murphy and a couple of STAR (Sheriff's Team of Active Retirees) volunteers.

Drennan said he felt confident in initiating all emergency alerts for residents in response to a question and then also addressed evacuation plans for the South Shore.

“You cannot evacuate South Lake Tahoe,” Drennan said. “We don’t have the infrastructure, the roads to evacuate.”

He said an evacuation plan is in the works, but if U.S. 50 turns into a parking lot like many expect, people should head for open spaces like school fields, paved places like the Y, beaches and the lake.

“But if you do get in a boat or kayak, don’t try to row to Tahoe City,” Drennan said. “The wind during a fire is probably going to make the lake a dangerous place. Stay close to the shore.”

Note: This event was organized and implemented under the leadership of Keegan Schafer, Fuels Management Officer, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District; Jay Manning, Battalion Chief, South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue; and assisted by Carlie Murphy, Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator, Tahoe Resource Conservation District.

Attention AI Tahoe Residents:

On Saturday and Sunday, August 22 and August 23, the AI Tahoe Community will participate in a Neighborhood Clean-up Work Day Event, from 9am to 5pm each day, as part of their efforts to become a Firewise USA certified district.

South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue and Tahoe Douglas Fire District Zephyr Chipping crews will be in AI Tahoe to assist homeowners with creating good defensible space around their properties and will show homeowners how to apply Firewise strategies, to reduce wildfire risk.



The crews are available for shrub removal, tree trimming and limbing from the ground, small diameter tree removal (at their discretion), and curbside chipping. (No pine needle removal, please)

If you would like to “pre-arrange” the crew’s service, you may fill out a form to request free crew time. There is no guarantee that the crews will make it to your property due to demand. Forms will be available on the

South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue website www.cityofslt.us/fire

Note: You may print a PDF version of the form, fill it out, and a member of the AI Tahoe Firewise Team will input your responses from your printed form. Forms can be dropped off at Fire Station 2 at 2951 Lake Tahoe Blvd by Thursday Aug 20th

Also, the Firewise committee is seeking nominations at for a senior homeowner or disabled community member to have their home be selected as a “demonstration” property. Nominations or questions are welcomed at altahoefirewise@gmail.com



FIREWISE USA
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

August 22-23, 2020 Clean-up Day Results:

86+ Al Tahoe Parcels received “Defensible Space Treatments”

47 “pre-scheduled” on-line requests

18 “day of event” (or more) requests

16 chip pile removal requests

3 dump truck loads of debris from “demo house”

6 tree removing and limbing applications provided by a local volunteer



Work completed at the demonstration house by Fire Crews

Note: This service was provided to a disabled/senior resident of Al Tahoe. It serves as an example of what an individual/community — could and should do to “treat” a property to reduce wildfire risk.

Tahoe Douglas Fire District Zephyr Crew and South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue Crews began cleanup on this property at 9am and completed fire mitigation treatments at 3pm.

Crews removed and chipped trees and limbs; cut, removed, and chipped brush; removed old wood piles and lumber from the property; raked and removed pine needles (3 full dump truck loads full). They also cleaned pine needles and debris from the roof and decks.





BEFORE



AFTER





This property was chosen to be treated by South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue and Tahoe Douglas Fire District Zephyr chipping crews as a demonstration of what a home with good defensible space should look like. The homeowner is a disabled senior citizen who was able to benefit from the applied Firewise strategies.



BEFORE



AFTER

Thank you to the AI Tahoe Community residents who have demonstrated commitment to this process of becoming a Firewise USA® certified community.