

# WATER - our MOUNTAIN GOLD



Suggestions from the  
Central Sierra Watershed Committee

## ***FIRE SAFE – FIRE CLEARANCE***

### **PROBLEM**

- Mariposa & Eastern Madera Counties have been identified as “High Fire Threat Areas” by the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection. The United States Forest Service has listed many of our communities in the Federal Register as “Communities at Risk,” based on the threat of fire from Federal lands.
- According to the California Fire Plan, the risk of wildfire is increasing, area population is increasing, and the topography of the area adds to the potential for wildfire. Combined, these factors place your property and assets at high risk. Without clearing and thinning to reduce the fuel load, the risk of wildfire on your property continues to increase.
- The threat of a large damaging wildfire is high, as is the potential for loss of valuable natural resources, personal property and human life.
- The 1961 Harlow Fire took place in this community. That fire still holds the record for the fastest moving fire in California fire fighting history.

**TREATMENT - To protect your property public law requires that you create a fire safe buffer at least 100 feet around your home .**

The steeper and more vegetated the property, the larger the buffer must be. To do this effectively, use the **“Lean, Clean, and Green approach.”**

#### **Lean:**

- ✓ Thin out thick vegetation to create a more park-like look.
- ✓ When in doubt, thin it out.
- ✓ Leave space between shrubs and trees to avoid the “ladder effect”, where fire jumps from lower plants to higher ones.

#### **Clean:**

- ✓ Keep lawns mowed, trim shrubs.
- ✓ Remove dry, resinous, or dead plants and flammable debris.
- ✓ Remove lower tree limbs, and limbs within 15 feet of chimneys, power lines and outbuildings.

#### **Green:**

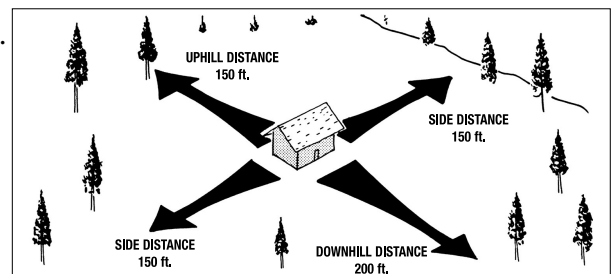
- ✓ Use non-combustible surfaces for walkways, patios and driveways.
- ✓ Use low growing, non-woody plants for landscaping.
- ✓ Provide irrigation to keep the plants within your defensible space green.

### **ADDITIONAL PREPARATION FOR FIRE SEASON**

- ✓ Clean all vegetation from roof eaves and rain gutters.

- ✓ Cover chimney outlets and flues with a spark arresting half inch mesh screen.

Defensible Space			
Recommended distances from your home based on steepness of slope			
Slope	0-20%	20-40%	+40%
Grass	100'	100'	100'
Shrubs	100'	200'	200'
Trees	100'	100'	200'



Defensible Space	
Recommended distances Between Tree Canopies	
Slope	Distance
0-20%	10 feet
20-40%	20 feet
+ 40%	30 feet

- ✓ Clean all flammable materials beneath decks.
- ✓ Keep emergency phone numbers and evacuation routes clearly posted.
- ✓ Keep weeds cut back.
- ✓ Move firewood at least 30 feet from all structures.
- ✓ Plan your escape route in advance.
- ✓ Make sure your address is clearly visible.
- ✓ Keep vehicles full of gas.
- ✓ Keep a two-week supply of water, candles, non-perishable food and medications.
- ✓ Keep cash, bank and insurance information handy.
- ✓ Prepare a “Grab and Go” bag for each family member and pet.

### **WHAT TO DO IF A FIRE IS HEADED YOUR WAY....**

If time permits, take a few precautions to provide additional fire defense for your home:

- ✓ **Remove** flammable items such as grass doormats and bamboo shades.
- ✓ **Minimize** flat surfaces that could let a burning ember smolder.
- ✓ **Tip** wood picnic tables and benches on their sides.
- ✓ **Remove** patio umbrellas, collapsible awnings and outdoor cushions.
- ✓ **Close** all windows, doors, and garage doors.
- ✓ **Wet down** buildings and defensible zone, including mulch piles and hay storage areas.
- ✓ **Move** furniture to center of room or wall away from fire.
- ✓ **Use** telephones only for emergencies.
- ✓ **Evacuate** if you are directed to do so.

**Get involved!** Join your local Fire Safe Council: Madera 559.877.3772; Mariposa 209.966.7700; or Highway 168 (Fresno) 559.855.3144.

The CSWC meets on the last Wednesday of every month at the Sierra Ambulance Office, 40755 Winding Way, Oakhurst, at 9 AM, and is open to the public. For information, please email [leavesofgrass@netptc.net](mailto:leavesofgrass@netptc.net).

*The mission of the Central Sierra Watershed Committee is to promote the quality, quantity, and aesthetic values of our water resources through the conservation and restoration of our watersheds.*

CSWC members include: Interested citizens, ranchers, homeowners; local Native American tribes; North Fork Community Development Council; Chowchilla-Redtop and Coarsegold Resource Conservation Districts; Chowchilla City Council; Upper Merced River Watershed Council; California Water Institute; Sierra Foothill Conservancy; Madera Irrigation District; Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council; US Army Corps of Engineers; Regional Water Quality Control Board; Madera County Environmental Health & Engineering; CA Department of Water Resources; Madera County Board of Supervisors; Madera Agriculture Commissioner; San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District; Natural Resource Conservation Service; and the United States Forest Service.

*Note: The contents of this article do not necessarily reflect the views of the State.*