

FOOTHILL FIRE FLASH

El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC)

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Are you signed up for RAVE?

RAVE - our county's emergency alert system- replaced Code Red several years ago and signing up is an important wildfire safety step for residents to take. To learn more and register your home phone, cell phone, and/or email address, visit ready.edso.org

Watch Duty and RAVE complement each other

The EDC Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services (OES) met recently with **Watch Duty** - the popular nonprofit wildfire alert app- which will now be added to the **RAVE** alert list.

"It's a good idea to have **Watch Duty** to get quick alerts for fires, but always go to trusted sites (EDSO, SLT City, Fire Districts, Cal Fire, etc.) for confirmed information from sources that have jurisdiction before you make a decision not to evacuate

My, How Fire Fighting has Changed!

A look at 100 yr difference between Crozier Fire, 2024 and El Dorado Fire, 1923

August's Crozier Fire threatened the towns of Georgetown, Garden Valley, Mosquito and Volcano, sending thousands on the Divide into evacuation. As with other fires in our county this last summer, disaster was ultimately averted. No structures were lost.

The fact that the winds died down was a huge help, and so was the fast and aggressive attack by air.

Compare that to the 1923 fire that blazed between Diamond Springs and El Dorado 100 years ago, nearly wiping out the town of El Dorado. But let's look at the Crozier Fire and modern fire fighting first.



Crozier Fire, August



CALFIRE

RAVE (cont)

CALFIRE

Even if you have Watch Duty, that will NOT call, text, and email you to leave, tell you which evacuation routes to use, where the shelters are, and when you can re-populate

Yes, you can get an alert from Watch Duty, but if you don't sign up for RAVE too, you are missing out on phone calls that would wake you in the middle of the night and on all the rest of the information."

Also, Watch Duty only covers fires, whereas RAVE covers all emergency incidents- from floods, to hazardous spills, active shooter alerts, etc.

"Best case for safety, sign up for RAVE, have Watch Duty with alerts on, and save or bookmark

How Firefighting has Changed! (Cont.)

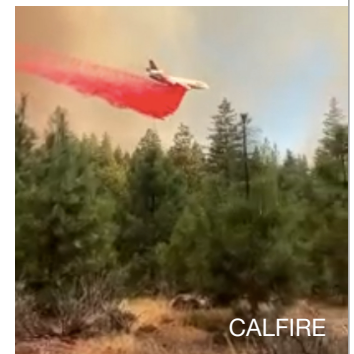
Crozier Fire- air attack, extensive evacuations, incident command, coordination across agencies

The Crozier Fire started during the night of Aug 6 just north of Slab Creek Reservoir, running rapidly through steep, heavily vegetated, remote terrain, tripling in size that first night. Vegetation was dryer than normal for that time of year, and access for firefighters to the fire fronts was hampered by roads that were either poorly maintained or nonexistent.

Evacuation orders were made early on, both to get civilians out of potential danger and to prevent traffic delaying the firefighting response. As one fire chief noted, "If civilians block the roads, you've lost the fire". And, as another noted, "These wildfires blow up more quickly than they used to, so we've learned to get more people out of the way sooner." (Georgetown Gazette 8-29-24)

Fortunately, air resources from both CAL FIRE and the Forest Service were available for deployment the next morning, including some redirected from the concurrent Park Fire near Red Bluff. On the ground, bulldozers had to be used to help firefighters access the fire (and were used to reinforce older fire breaks and establish new ones as well).

At the peak of the fire, there were over 1,000 firefighters engaged, including 34 fire engines with crews, 24 hand crews, numerous helicopters and air tankers, 23 dozers, and a large law enforcement contingent led by the EDC Sheriff's Office, all managed by an "Incident Commander". Helpful resources came from a broad range of groups including AT&T, UC Berkeley Blodgett Forest, Cal OES, Calif. Conservation Corp., Calif. Dept. Corrections and Rehabilitation, Calif. Highway Patrol, El Dorado County, El Dorado Irrigation District (EID), Georgetown Divide Public Utility District, PG&E, Red Cross (Alpine, Amador, El Dorado, Placer), Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), and Siller Brothers. 15 days later the fire was completely contained.



The 1923 El Dorado Fire - volunteers from every walk of life

The response to a fire in 1923 was very different! The week of September 17, 1923 was a tough time in California, with fires raging in 18 counties. One was a fire that started in Diamond Springs (at the California Door Company- "Caldor") and was fanned by high winds 2 miles west to the town of El Dorado. By the time it was done it had burned 1,000 acres of grazing land and most of El Dorado, nearly wiping out the town. The Mt. Democrat a week later (Sept 22, 1923) described it as having been a roaring furnace extending from Diamond Springs to El Dorado between the state highway and the dirt road fanned by the highest wind known in years.



The all day firefighting response was from volunteers, as described in the Mt. Democrat: "Soon after noon the fire siren blew and the word was passed around [in Placerville] that El Dorado was burning and needed help. Inside of half an hour every available automobile and at least a hundred men had left for El Dorado....El Dorado was an inferno and enveloped in smoke, but on every corner, in every alley, and about each building were men fighting as best they could with the implements at hand. Apparently everything was on fire.



"Every pump and well in the town was manned and every pail and tub and pan was in use to convey water and to wet sacks and coats used to smother the fires as they started. One cottage that was saved was on fire eleven times in twenty minutes and working around it and on the roof were day laborers, county officials, farmers, merchants and even newspaper men...



During the gold rush almost 75 years still earlier whole foothill towns frequently burned. In response, stone buildings with iron shutters and doors were erected, such as the Fountain-Talliman Soda building still standing in Placerville. Some knew to "harden" their buildings from an early time!

Chas. Baumgardner was one of the men on the roof of the cottage when a gable at one corner began to burn. He crawled to the burning gable, tore it loose and hurled it to the ground, but a shingle had caught fire and being without water he actually laid flat and spit out the tiny blaze and then smothered it with his hand..."

"Everyone in El Dorado county is ready to extend the helping hand to those who have had the misfortune to be burned out and the homeless on Monday were quickly cared for...A fund was raised and everything done to make the unfortunate ones as comfortable as possible" (Mt. Democrat Sept 22, 1923)

Community Togetherness- then and now

Today we can marvel at the community outpouring of firefighting and financial help. And though we may not be out there lying on the roof and spitting on the fire as Mr. Baumgardner did, our fire safe council work is also a community effort - a pulling together of residents to work in the same direction - towards a more fire resilient El Dorado County, by promoting home hardening, defensible space, better road access, and protective fuel breaks. Fortunately we now also have multitudes of professional firefighters, fire prevention officers, law enforcement and other county employees pulling with us towards that same goal.

Eaves: Home Hardening Spotlight

The actions described below are not required by law, but like all home hardening, can greatly increase the chance of your house surviving even a large wildfire.

Eaves, the area under the roof where it sticks out beyond your exterior walls, is an especially vulnerable spot. Heat or even flames traveling up the wall can be trapped there and circulate, causing intense temperatures. This spot is even more vulnerable if you have the typical “open eaves” where combustible roof rafters and the roof under-sheathing are exposed, as at right. Vents in this location are likewise particularly vulnerable to ember entry and resulting ignition.



UCANR

Following the advice of the excellent **Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide** found on CAL FIRE’s Ready for Wildfire site, there are two retrofit options that can help keep your home from catching fire at the eaves:

1. Carefully inspect all open eave areas for gaps into the attic, where embers could lodge or pass through. All vents should be screened and all other gaps should be filled with durable caulk, such that no openings greater than 1/8 inch remain. (An ember that is even 1/4 inch in size has enough energy, especially when arriving by the thousands, to catch your attic on fire if they enter).
2. Even safer is to enclose the under-eave area instead with noncombustible material, creating a closed in “soffit”. Any vents should be placed away from the wall, as shown in the diagram below, right, and should have gaps less than 1/8 inch also. Soffits are required by some insurance.

How to close in eaves, making a soffit: Closing in eaves does not generally affect structural members and so is a relatively straight forward DIY project if you are handy.



Add framing so there’s something to attach noncombustible soffit material to. Local hardware stores carry thinner (not as heavy!) fibercement material made specifically for creating noncombustible soffits. Consult a contractor for more detail.

What's good for wildlife is often good for wildfire safety too!

Sierra Wildlife Rescue recommendations. “Each year, millions, if not billions, of wild animals perish because they enter homes. A great number of these animals could and would survive to live out their natural lives if we homeowners would take a few precautionary steps. Please take a walk around your home today, maybe climb up on your roof, and feel good about not only preventing damage to your property but also saving lives.”

These specific wildlife protection recommendations of theirs **also make your home safer from wildfire!:**

- No holes, cracks, or gaps in siding, soffits, or at fascia board (which also prevents ember ignition)
- Shrubbery is trimmed away from house (5 foot shrub free zone is best for wildfire)
- Branches are cut back from roof (5 foot at least for wildfire safety)
- Chimney cap is secure and has wire mesh covering any gaps
- Gable vents have secure metal screening (with mesh no greater than 1/8 inch best for wildfire)
- Porches/decks have underpinning with wire mesh, extending partially into the ground ($\leq 1/8$ " for wildfire)
- All windows and doors, including garage doors, seal tight
- All entrance/exits of wiring and plumbing are sealed tight also.



El Dorado County Fire Safe Council art partnership

The City of Sacramento Office of Arts and Culture, and Arts and Culture El Dorado supported a project this year for EDCFSC. Local artist Nate Reifke created sticker and banner graphics to help us with our messaging. The banners, shown below, are planned to be displayed in various places around the County, including areas where there are no associate fire safe councils, but where EDCFSC still works to promote wildfire resilience.



El Dorado County Fire Safe Council art partnership (cont.)

The stickers, shown here, were designed for water bottles and such, and will be given out at the County Fair. A big thank you to Nate and both sponsors for this great project, as well as to the California Fire Safe Council, whose grant monies will pay for printing the banners.



Fire Safe Council Doings

Rancho del Sol greenwaste approach- Hauling bags for residents

The relatively small (138 home) Rancho del Sol FSC was one of many FSCs that used Title 3 money from EDCFSC and the county for a Greenwaste Day. They installed four 20 yard dumpsters at one location for a November weekend cleanup. Volunteers were on hand both Saturday (8-4) and Sunday (10-2) helping as all 4 were filled to the top. As part of the effort their FSC rented a chipper, which two volunteers then manned. Building on their pilot effort in the Spring, they also had volunteers with trucks and trailer offer to haul bagged debris for residents unable to bring the material themselves. 129 bags of debris were transported that way, which was greatly appreciated by the people who used the service. Altogether 38 people, covering roughly a third of the FSC's homes, availed themselves of this successful Greenwaste Disposal Day. We applaud their ability to tap into community spirit, with neighbors helping neighbors become more fire safe.



ForestSong- an art event centered around grief, despair, and hope, with Coloma-Lotus FSC participation

Local Artist Andie Thrans produced nine events throughout El Dorado and Amador Counties this past year, investigating grief, beauty, and interconnection related to wildfire and the environment. Coloma-Lotus FSC joined the final event of this moving, unique art project, held on September 29, sharing a booth with El Dorado County Neighborhood Radio Watch. The peaceful outdoor venue was Camp Lotus along the South Fork of the American River. It's great to see a FSC reaching out to their public in less traditional ways like this and tapping into the arts world! ForestSong received support from the California Arts Council, the City of Sacramento Office of Arts and Culture, and Arts and Culture El Dorado.

“The event was well attended and we gave out many copies of the El Dorado County's Wildfire Preparedness booklet”
Bob Hess. Coloma-Lotus



Logtown FSC- 16th Annual Hot Dog Social.

Bob Hess, Coloma-Lotus FSC

At a recent El Dorado County Fire Safe Council Board meeting, Pat Dwyer mentioned that their annual Hotdog Social would be held on Saturday, October 12th. Since we, the Coloma-Lotus Fire Safe Council, have been looking for fundraising ideas, I decided to see just what this long-standing event was all about.

Besides hotdogs, beer, etc., the event also featured a question/answer session, with correct answers resulting in some fabulous prizes. There were also both live and a well-stocked silent auction. Having done fundraisers in the past, I know just how much work it takes to beg for prizes. Kudos to the Logtown Board for coming up with several great ones. They were able to raise \$3,000 from this event for future projects, with 70-100 attendees.

It was really clear that this Logtown Fire Safe Council knows how to throw a party! The hard work of the board members and the way the public was engaged was very impressive. I took some pictures and showed them to our board members. Hopefully, we will be able to hold a similar event in the future.

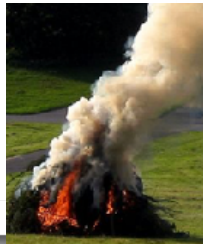


A BIG thank you to FSC volunteers who helped with county events this Fall, getting the word out about EDCFSC and wildfire preparation! Volunteers came from 6 different associate FSCs, taking time out from their own FSC work to help:

- **El Dorado Foundation's Volunteer Fair, late August:** Coloma-Lotus and Camino FSCs
- **Veterans Stand-Down, September:** Grizzly Flats and Oak Hill Area FSCs
- **Fall into Gardening Master Gardener event, October:** Fort Jim, Sand Ridge, Oak Hill Area FSCs



Pile Burning: Burn restrictions had been lifted a bit ago, and now, starting Monday Nov. 25, 8AM, you no longer need a burn permit. You **MUST verify it's a burn day though: (530) 621-5897** and follow [safe practices](#) . For alternatives to burning, visit [EDC website](#).



Let your December holidays be full of family and joy, and not disaster!

- Stay in the room if candles are lit.
- Only use sound holiday electric lights with no fraying/ breaks.
- Keep indoor trees well-watered.



Need help figuring out what to do to keep your home wildfire safe? Need help getting it done?-

- [Insurance discounts](#) [El Dorado Co. Fire Safe Council](#) [Free chipping prog.](#)
[Senior/vet/low income program](#) [Defensible Space](#) [Home hardening](#)

Volunteer Assessments - free!

Informal assessments continue to be offered by El Dorado County Fire Safe Council volunteers, who have gone through a two day hands on training to learn cutting edge home hardening and defensible space pointers. Assessments cover both aspects of wildfire prep. If you want to learn proven ways specific to your own home that really can help it survive a wildfire, request a free home visit from such a volunteer in your area, at **(530) 647-1700** or [EDC FSC website](#).



Hazard Tree Help - for all



Concerned about a dead, dying, or beetle-infested tree that could hit your driveway or house? The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council can help here too, thanks to state grant funds received

and recently renewed through 2030. Certified arborists will be sent to assess your trees, and you can receive up to \$4000 of tree felling and chipping services per property. Unless you are low income, you will need to contribute 25% of the cost. [Details and sign up form are here.](#)