

# Wildfire Risk and Response

Eastside Fire and Rescue  
April 2024

ISSAQUAH, NORTH BEND, SAMMAMISH, THE SNOQUALMIE TRIBE, MERCER



ISLAND, AND DISTRICTS 10, 38, & WOODINVILLE FIRE & RESCUE

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*Dedication to Community*

# Wildfire Response, Risk, Risk Reduction



Sumner Grade Fire, Photo: KOMO News, 2020



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# Wildfire Response Capabilities

- Multi-tiered response
  - Closest “first in” engines (including Mercer Island’s “midi” engines)
- Brush fire response (1<sup>st</sup> alarm = 3 engines and BC)
- Eastside’s brush trucks (BR133, BR178, BR182, BR187, and a DNR crew at St 176)
- Mutual Aid brush trucks (Bellevue, Bothell, Fall City, Redmond, Renton, Shoreline, KCFD 45/Duvall, and more)



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# Wildfire Response Capabilities

- Eastside Staffing
  - All Eastside firefighters have wildfire training (Red Card)
  - 50+ on the wildland team



Bolt Creek Fire, 2022, photo Everett Herald



# Wildfire Response Capabilities

- Water supply
  - Hydrants
  - Tankers
  - Drafting

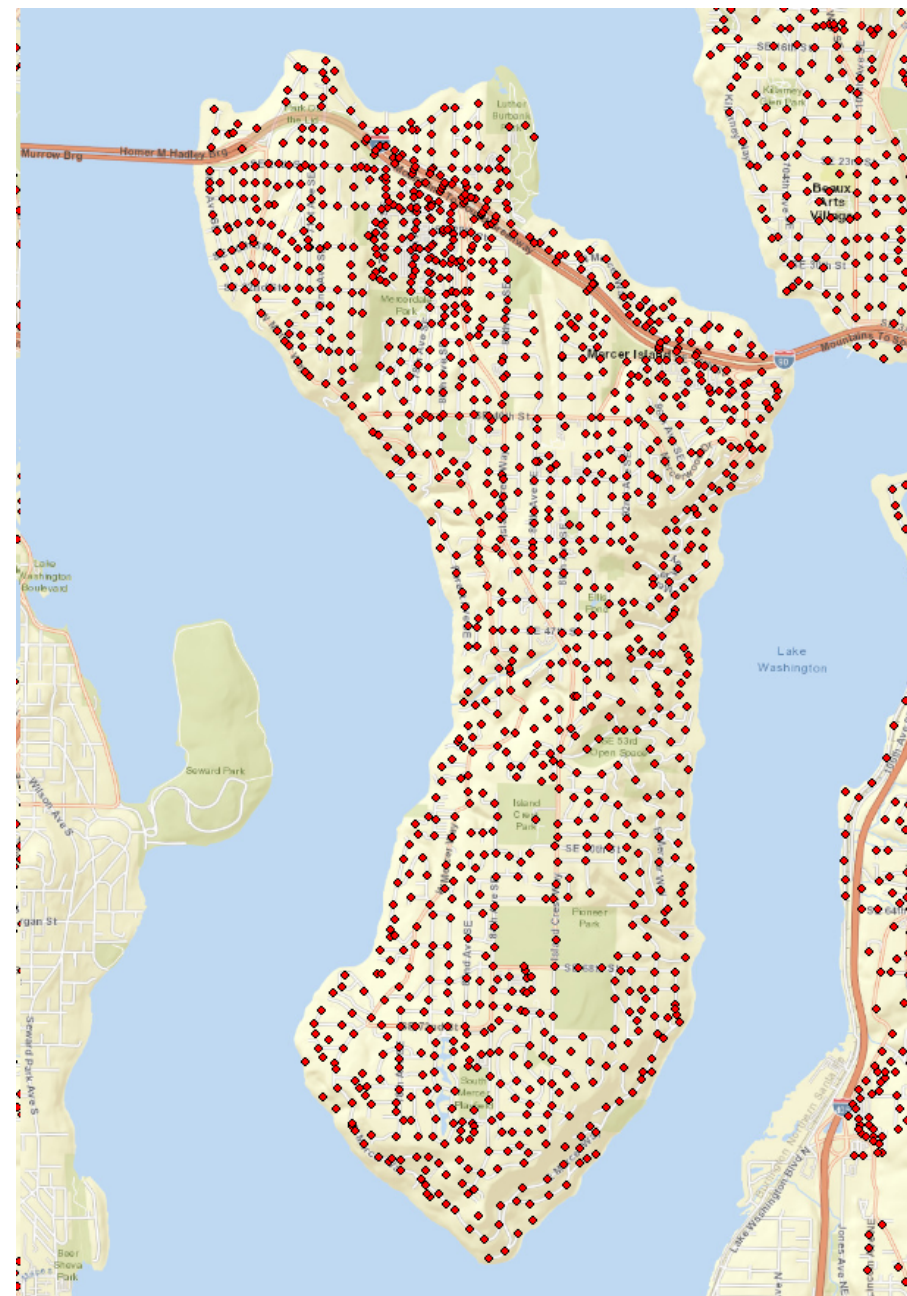


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# Hydrants

- The island is well served with fire hydrants



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# Wildfire Response Capabilities

- Regional Expertise
  - State Mobilizations
  - Regional and State Incident Management Teams

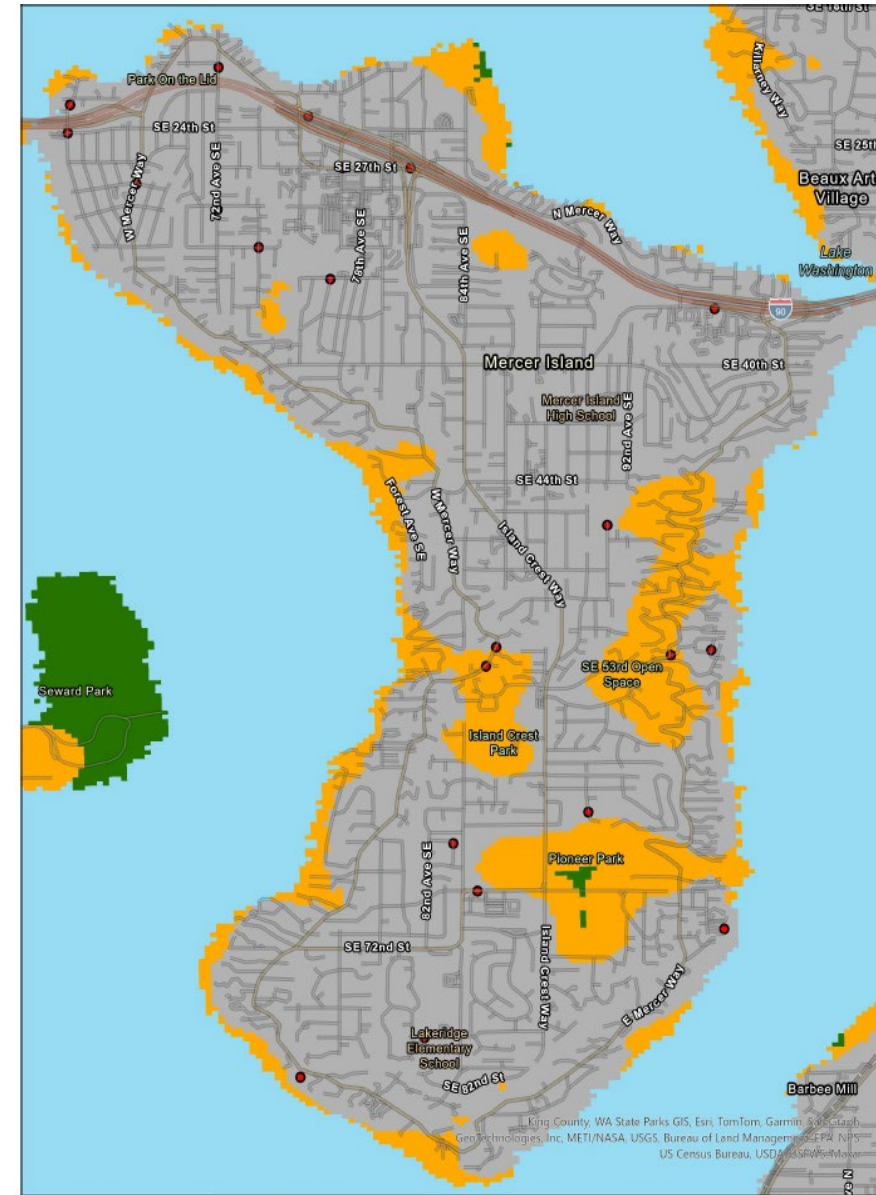
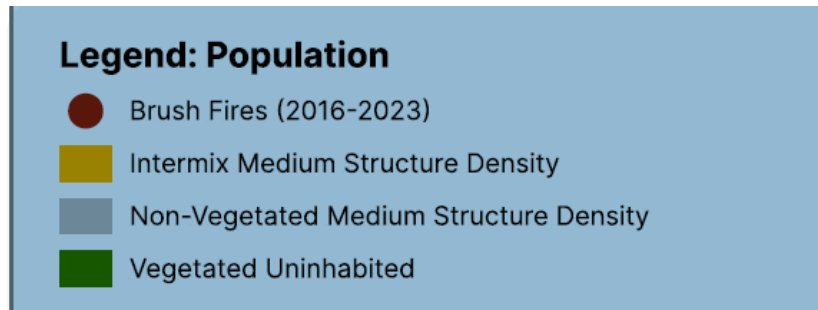


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# Wildfire Risk

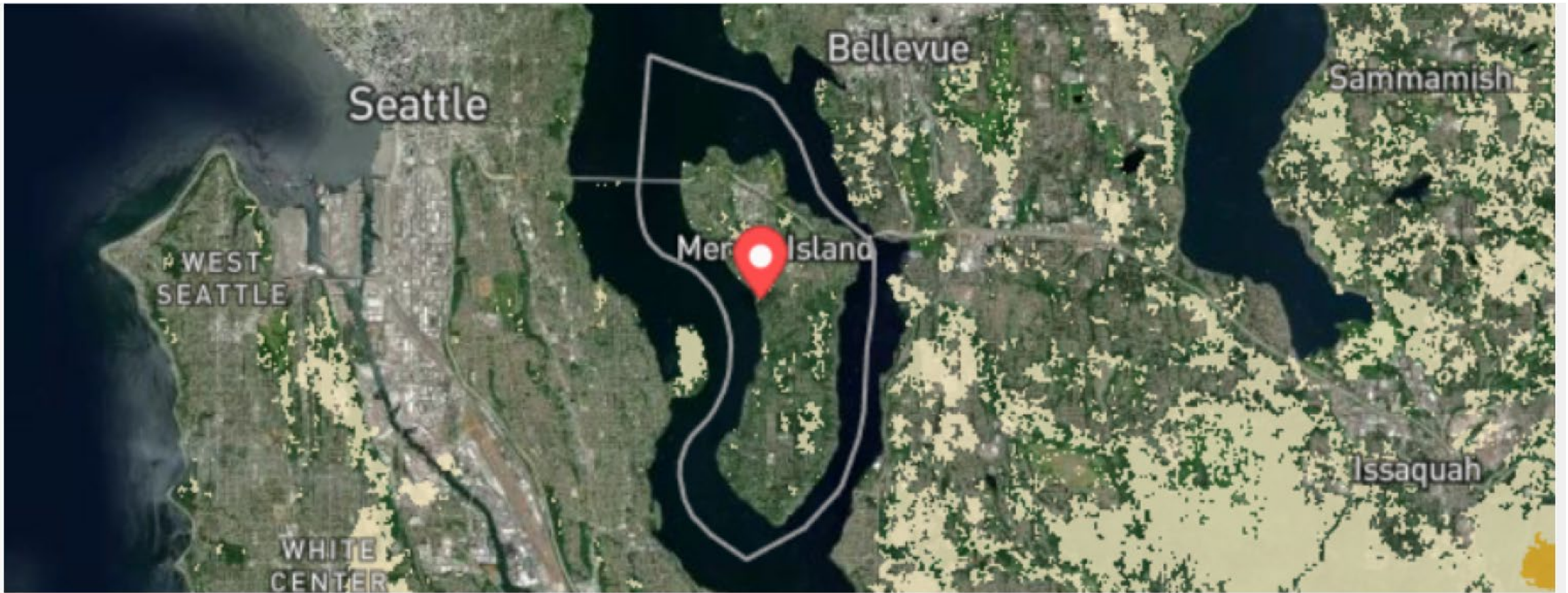
- Wildland Urban Interface
  - Buildings in close proximity to vegetation
  - Activities that cause fires
- “Brush fire” history



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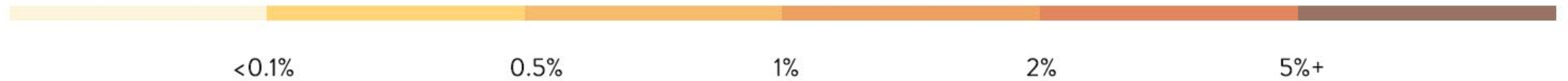
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% likelihood of wildfire

Cumulative Wildfire Risk, over 30 years



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# Wildfire Risk

- Westside wildfire risk is historically low, with small slow-moving fires
- And then ... Sumner Grade (2020) and Bolt Creek (2022)



Sumner Grade Fire,  
Photo KOMO News, 2020



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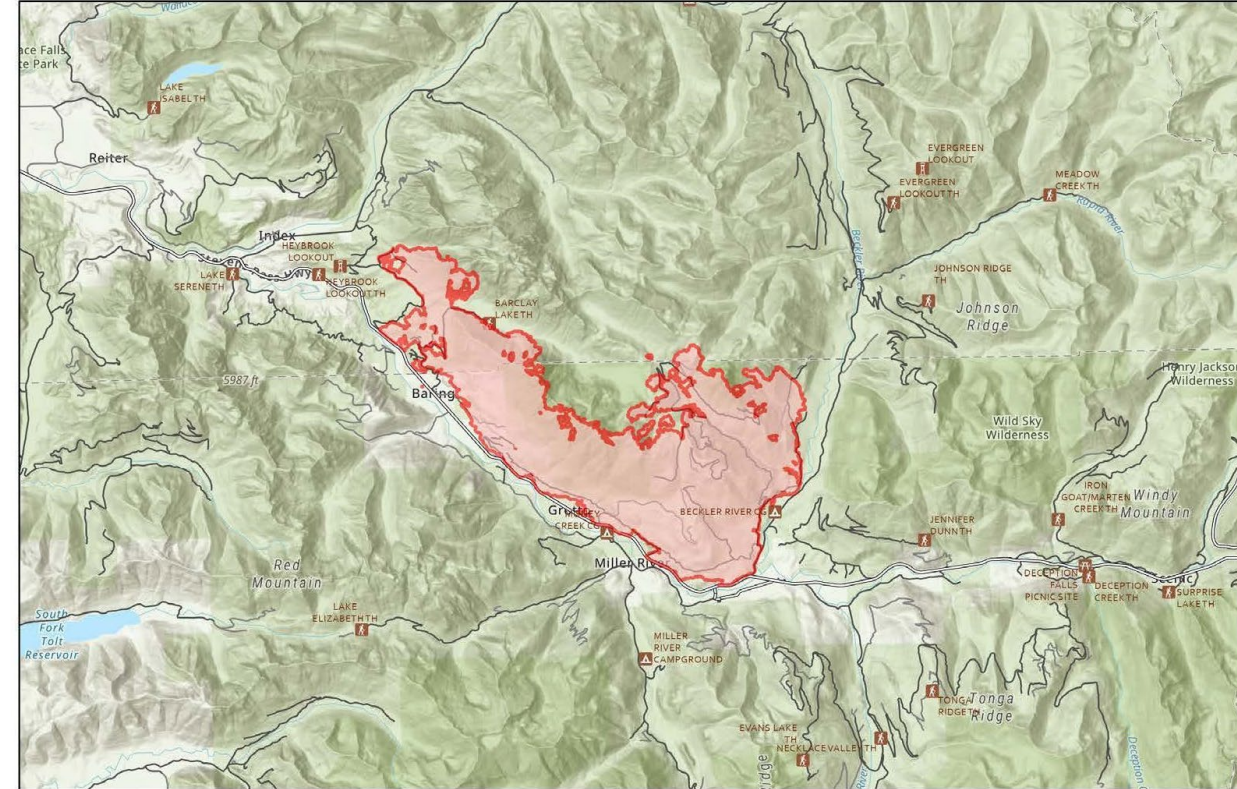


# Wildfire Risk



Photo: Journal425

## Fire Information



**Bolt Creek**  
**WA-NWS-000150**

14,714 acres at 10/17/2022 @1917



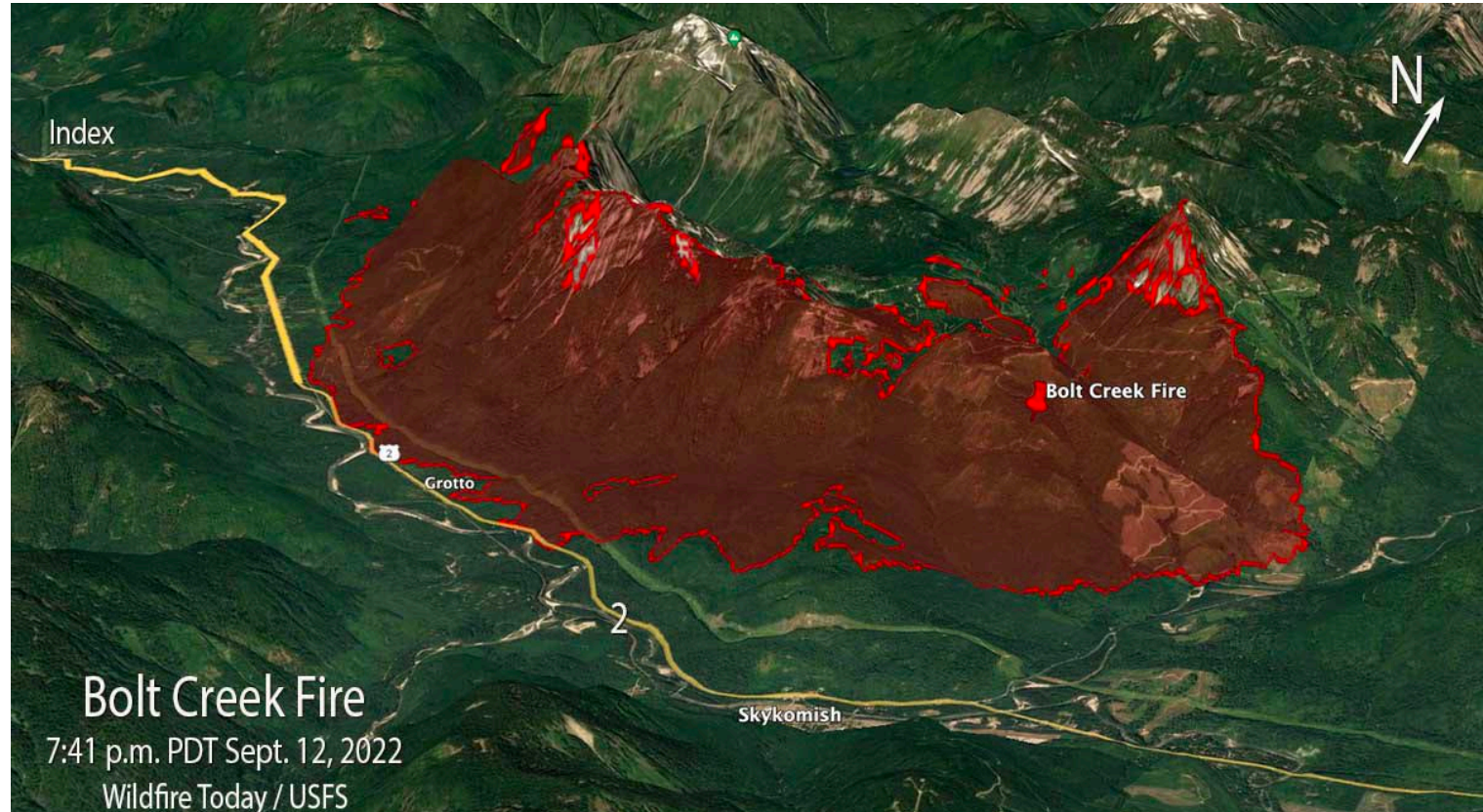
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# Wildfire Risk

- Mercer Island has a lower risk than recent high-profile fires
  - Away from Cascade Gaps
  - Healthy vegetation/'tree canopy
  - Location – moderated temperature
  - Geography
  - Good access for fire suppression
  - Adopted current building codes
- *Wise to recognize potential changing risk*



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# Wildfire Risk Reduction

## Community Wildfire Protection Planning

- It's a process
- Balance community interests, safety, risk tolerance, building code
- Conduct assessments of neighborhood or individual property risk
- Look at the building materials, access, vegetation management
- Consider community notification tools



U.S. Fire Administration  
Working for a fire-safe America

## Creating a Community Wildfire Protection Plan



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# Wildfire Urban Interface

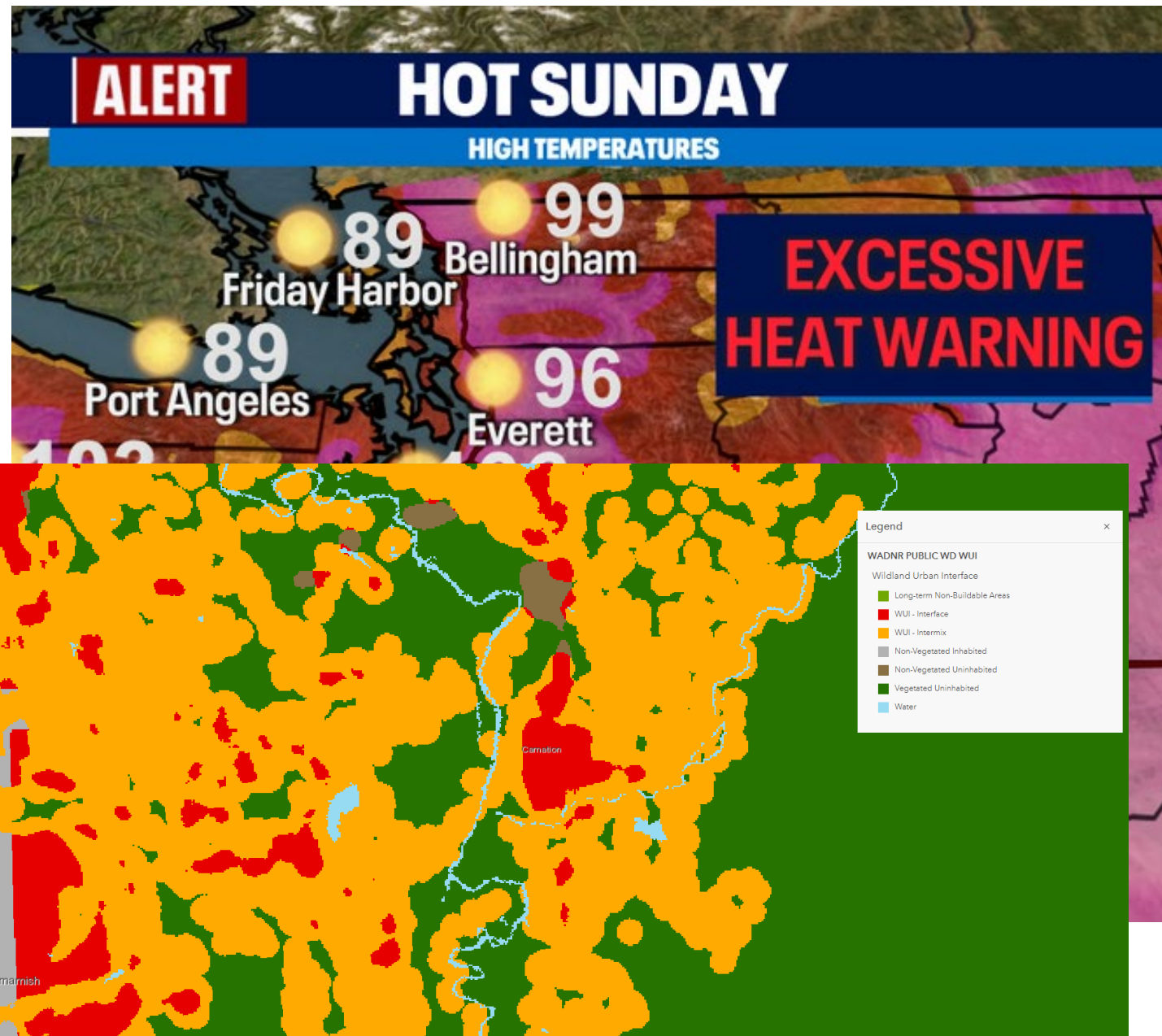
The WUI maps areas where wildland\* meets or intermingles with human development.

Factors involved in wildfire risk

- Natural Environment: weather, temperature, humidity, wind, topography.
  - Vegetation: Types? Likely to burn?
  - Fire History: How often does it burn? When was the last burn?
- Built Environment: building materials, critical infrastructure, roads, access & evacuation.
- Social Environment: population, cultural, historic, recreation.

\*natural, undeveloped areas

Source: [Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\) | Washington State Geospatial Open Data Portal](#)





# Home Hardening

- What is the common cause of homes burning in a wildfire?
- Mitigating 0-5 feet out from home is most critical. Why?
- Remove flammable items – wood mulch, dried needles, leaves, & debris, plants in contact with home
- Screen vents with 1/8 – inch mesh to prevent embers entering home

## Guidelines for Wildfire Safety when buying a home

### Safe Spacing

Remove lower tree limbs to reduce "fire ladder".

Keep flammable trees 10 feet from roof or deck.\*

Keep all trees 10 feet from chimney.\*

Minimize the fuel load of trees and shrubs with proper spacing.

### Use Rated Roofing Material\*

Roofing material with a Class A or B rating is fire resistant and will help keep the flame from spreading (e.g. metal, composition shingle, clay, or cement tile)

### Use Glass Skylights

Glass is a better choice than plastic or fiberglass. Plastic can melt and allow embers into the home.

### Enclose Under Decks

Prevent combustible materials and firebrands from accumulating. Box-in under patios and decks or screen in with metal mesh no larger than 1/8".



Keep Clear

10'

For Sale

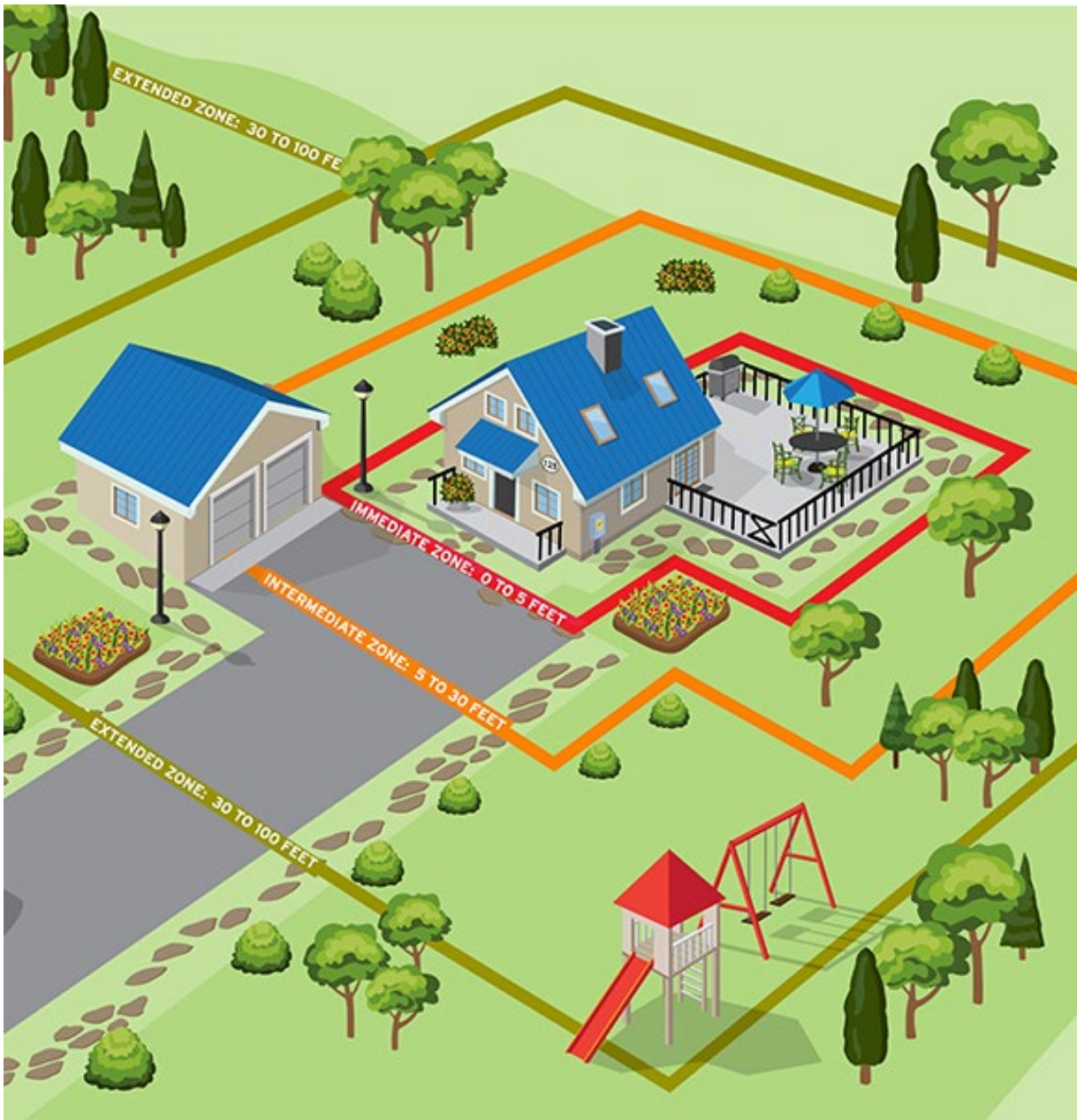
Enclose Eaves and Fascias, and Screen in Soffits and Vents 'Box-in' eaves. All vent openings should be covered with 1/8" or smaller metal mesh to resist embers.



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# COMMUNICATING DURING AN EMERGENCY

**ALERT King County**

**City Website**

**Social Media**

**Electronic Message  
Boards**

**City Phone Line  
206-275-7600**

**Local Media  
FM 88.9**

**HAM Radio / MIRO**

**Loudspeaker /  
Door-to-Door**

**Neighbor-to-  
Neighbor**



# EMERGENCY MESSAGING

## READY. SET. GO.

**Ready.** Be aware of the danger in your area. Prepare for possible evacuation.

- Monitor City information channels and local media.
- Check on neighbors.
- Assemble or update your evacuation plan or a go-kit.

**Set.** Be prepared for sudden or short-notice evacuation.

- Leave if you feel unsafe -- do not wait for an official evacuation order.

**Go!** Go now!

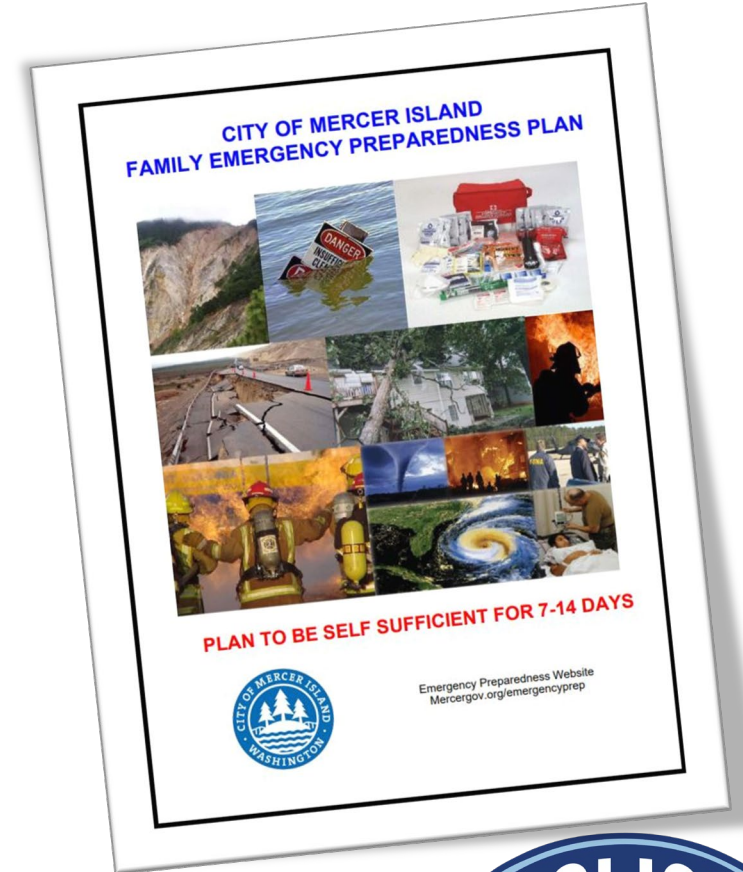
- Do not return home until officials have determined it is safe.





# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

1. Create a plan for your household.
2. Build a kit.
3. Talk with your family about preparedness and practice the plan.



# EVENTS, CLASSES, & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- Emergency Preparedness and MIRO Field Day | June 22
- Emergency Well Training | June 28
- National Night Out | August 6
- Community Emergency Response Team Training (CERT) | Fall

## Programs Available Throughout the Year

- Map Your Neighborhood
- Amateur Radio Operator Training
- Emergency Preparedness Presentation





# QUESTIONS

## MORE INFORMATION

General Emergency Preparedness  
[www.MercerIsland.gov/emergencyprep](http://www.MercerIsland.gov/emergencyprep)

Sign-up for Emergency Alerts  
[www.MercerIsland.gov/emergencyalert](http://www.MercerIsland.gov/emergencyalert)

Wildfire Preparedness Information  
[www.MercerIsland.gov/wildfire](http://www.MercerIsland.gov/wildfire)

## CONTACT

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