

STAFF REPORT

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
MEETING DATE: JULY 21, 2025
FROM: WILLIAM WATSON, ADMINISTRATIVE PROJECT MANAGER
SUBJECT: FIRE SAFETY

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is provided for discussion and feedback on staff priorities.

BACKGROUND

As the risk of wildfire has increased, we've all become more focused on fire danger mitigation. Defensible space, evacuation routes, and fire insurance cost concerns are top of mind for many of us.

Staff have been focused on what the City can do to help ensure our community is as prepared as possible. The updated Weed Abatement Ordinance is one piece of this puzzle, discussed earlier tonight. We have been actively working with the County to update our Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. We have also been researching available programs to see what other preventative efforts are worthwhile. As the recent floods in Texas demonstrate, it can be extremely difficult to weigh the risk / reward of emergency preparation. In our community, with limited funds, we need to be as prepared as possible while being judicious with taxpayer money. Prevention efforts could consume as much money, time and effort as we're willing to apply to it.

Some actions can be taken by Cities or Fire Districts. Others are actions to be taken by homeowners, with Cities and Fire Districts acting as a source of information and encouragement.

Fire Risk Reduction Community

Cities can take steps to become a Fire Risk Reduction Community. This is a program by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Becoming a FRRC would give us priority for Cal FIRE Wildfire prevention grant funding and can impact fire insurance costs. It would require the city to complete a thorough review and update of ordinances and practices every two years. We would need to update our Safety Element and make progress on recommended improvements. We would need to meet several other criteria which can include: 1) Local regulations that exceed minimum state regulations, 2) Adopting a defensible space ordinance, 3) Adopt comprehensive retrofit code for existing homes, 4) Identification of wildfire as a high priority hazard in our local hazard mitigation plan. Applications must be submitted by Oct 1, 2025. Attaining this status would make us eligible for Hazard Fuels Reduction grants which we

could possible use for our weed abatement program. It can lead to reduction in insurance rates, how much is unclear. It is likely that homeowners would need to incur costs to fire harden their homes such as a Class A fire rated roof, 5 foot ember resistant zone around home, ember and fire-resistant vents, enclosed eaves, upgraded windows, and so on. More information can be found here <https://calfire-umb05.azurewebsites.net/projects-and-programs/fire-risk-reduction-community-list/>

The City of Shasta Lake is an FRRC and has a lot of great materials online (links below)

Firewise USA Community Recognition Program

The Firewise USA Community Recognition Program, administered by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), is a national initiative that promotes wildfire risk reduction in communities located within the wildland-urban interface (WUI). The program provides a framework for neighborhoods to organize defensible space efforts, conduct risk assessments, and engage residents in annual mitigation activities. Information can be found here <https://readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/firewise-communities/>.

California supports Firewise through fire safe councils, state funding, and coordination with fire agencies. Many communities in the state use the program to improve fire resilience, qualify for grants, and support homeowners in accessing insurance discounts. Locally, the Amador Fire Safe Council serves as a resource for Sutter Creek and surrounding areas, offering guidance on wildfire preparedness and community-led initiatives <https://www.amadorfiresafe.org/>.

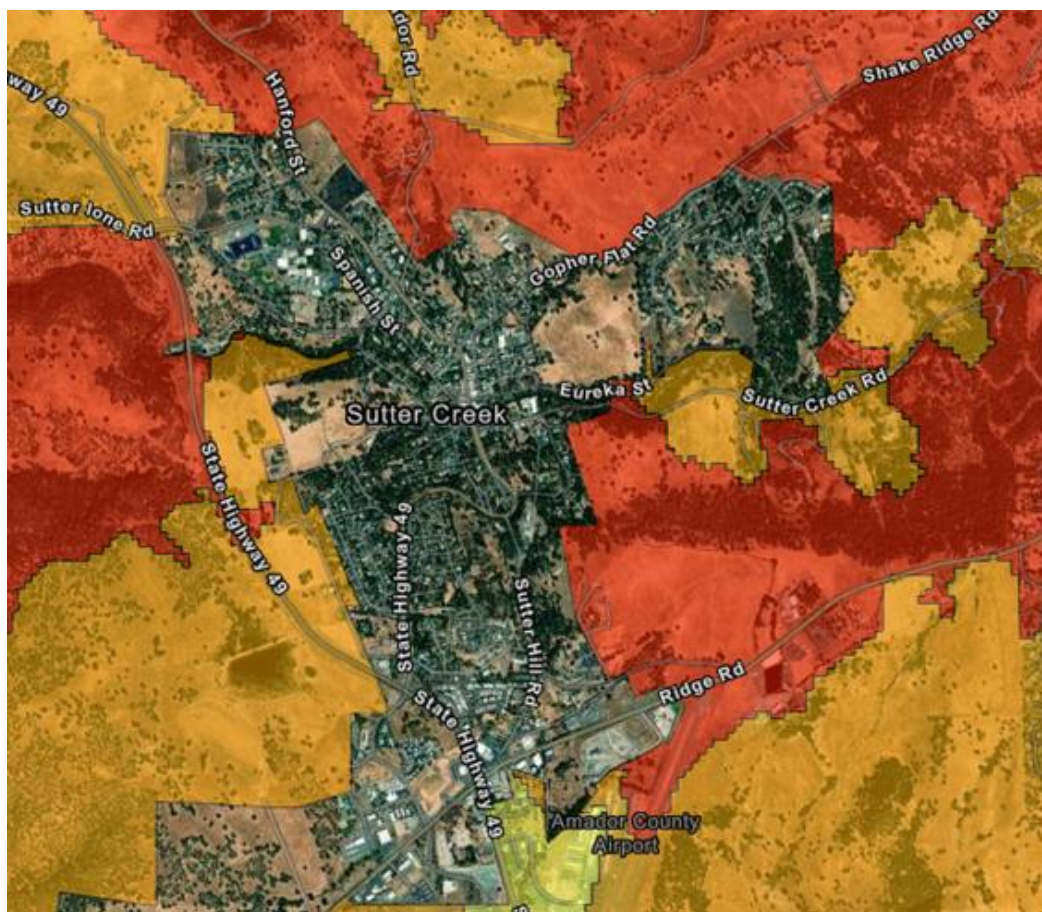
Firewise USA offers a voluntary, community-based model to reduce wildfire threats through education, planning, and collective action. Its five core requirements—risk assessment, action planning, a local committee, community outreach, and annual reporting—provide structure for neighborhoods to become more fire-adapted.

Firewise can be implemented in groups as small as eight houses. Neighborhoods can decide to become a Firewise Community. An interested group must establish a board or committee, develop a wildfire risk assessment plan updated every five years, create and maintain an action plan updated every three years, document community engagement, and then apply for recognition. The City could promote and provide information on Firewise, but attaining it would require significant effort on the part of residents.

In both programs, homeowners must be active participants. FRRC appears to be more aimed at Cities to create ordinances and programs to encourage compliance. Firewise appears to be more volunteer based with homeowners leading the process.

DISCUSSION

Sutter Creek lies in a **high and very high wildfire risk zone**. Firewise strategies such as vegetation management, ember-resistant construction, and neighborhood-level organizing are highly applicable and complement existing City policies.



One of the strongest incentives for participation is the potential for **insurance benefits**. California law requires insurance companies to provide discounts to policyholders who take wildfire mitigation actions. Firewise designation is recognized by multiple insurance providers, including USAA, Mercury Insurance, and the California FAIR Plan, and may be used as a qualifying factor in underwriting decisions. Actual benefits vary based on provider policies and individual property characteristics.

For more on insurance-related advantages and community safety benefits, residents can visit firesafelake.org/benefits, a resource maintained by the Lake County Fire Safe Council.

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COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS & STEPS

As public concern around wildfire preparedness grows, residents and local leaders may want to explore ways to expand current efforts. Some opportunities include:

- **Organizing at the neighborhood level** through a Firewise committee or other volunteer group.
- **Partnering with the Amador Fire Safe Council** to access technical assistance, grant resources, and support for mitigation planning.
- **Becoming a Fire Risk Reduction Community to qualify for fuels management or education grants** through state or regional programs.
- **Hosting local events or workshops** focused on defensible space, insurance literacy, and evacuation planning.
- **Identifying a community liaison or coordinator** to facilitate information sharing and preparedness activities.

Volunteers and neighborhood groups can play a major role in building a more fire-adapted Sutter Creek, especially when supported by local and regional agencies. Residents have already expressed a desire for greater preparedness, and this report is intended to inform and encourage that momentum. Whether through Firewise or other grassroots efforts, increased resident participation can enhance public safety, reduce wildfire damage, and create long-term benefits across the city.

We expect this to be potentially one of many discussions on fire safety, depending on feedback from the City Council.

BUDGET IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this informational report. It is intended solely to educate and inform residents about available wildfire mitigation resources and community-based programs. Additional steps will require investments that could be substantial such as updating our Safety Element or creating new ordinances with corresponding enforcement costs.

ATTACHMENT:

City of Shasta Lake Preparedness and Insurance Resolution:

<https://www.cityofshastalake.gov/1225/Wildfire-Preparedness-and-Insurance-Reso>

Shasta Lake Wildfire Preparedness Guide:

[Shasta-Lake-Wildfire-Information-and-Preparedness-Guide-2025-web](#)

Lake County Fire Safe Council

firesafelake.org/benefits

California Code of Regulations:

[View Document - California Code of Regulations](#)

Amador Fire Safe Council

<https://www.amadorfiresafe.org/>