

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS REACHES A MILESTONE WITH 700TH COMMUNITY IN CALIFORNIA DESIGNATED ‘FIREWISE’

Sacramento - California has set a record for wildfire prepared communities. This week Upper Mark West Fire Safe Council in Sonoma County was honored as the 700th Firewise USA[®] community in the state. The recognition by the [National Fire Protection Association[®]](#) (NFPA[®]) highlights the steps the community has taken to ensure that wildfire risk is reduced in their area and that residents are prepared.

“A large part of our wildfire preparedness strategy this year has been to work closely with local communities and neighborhoods in earning the NFPA Firewise USA community recognition,” said Chief Daniel Berlant, Acting State Fire Marshal/Deputy Director, Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division. “Reaching the 700th community mark within eight months of the 600th community mark is a major accomplishment statewide.”

To complete their application, the Upper Mark West community worked closely with the CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal’s Firewise Liaison, Sonoma County Fire District, CAL FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit, and Fire Safe Sonoma. The Upper Mark West community is in the wildland urban interface with dispersed property lots, most being greater than one acre. This community is no stranger to wildfire risk, having experienced the 2017 Tubbs Fire and 2020 Glass Fire that burned about 50% of their footprint.

Upper Mark West is extremely active with regular hands-on fire prevention workshops, community work parties, and gatherings to promote fire safety materials. They have an extensive listserv for their community members and send a regular [newsletter](#). The community has also been successful in grant writing, having received a CAL FIRE planning grant to address large scale fuels reduction projects and a county grant to do roadside fuel reduction. In addition, the community just completed an evacuation drill for their footprint.

“While we celebrate the recognition of the Upper Mark West community, we continue to be grateful to all 700 communities who have worked hard this year to prepare their neighborhoods for wildfire,” said Chief Berlant.

“Wildfires can impact dozens or hundreds of homes simultaneously,” said Michele Steinberg, Director of the NFPA Wildfire Division. “The work people do along with their neighbors through Firewise USA helps the whole community to substantively reduce the risk curve.”

The Firewise USA recognition program is administered by the National Fire Protection Association. Individuals and communities participate on a voluntary basis and are recognized as a Firewise Community upon the completion of certain tasks, including forming a committee of residents and other wildfire stakeholders, obtaining a written risk assessment form, developing a three-year action plan for the community, including hosting an outreach event and ultimately completing their application to become a Firewise Community.

To learn the steps and begin the process of becoming a California Firewise Community, visit:
www.ReadyForWildfire.org/prevent-wildfire/firewise-communities/

[View and download photos from the 700th Firewise Community ceremony.](#)

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